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VILLAGE AND TOWN LIFE IN CHINA

IN PREPARATION

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VILLAGE AND TOWN LIFE IN CHINA

BY

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AND

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WITH A PREFACE BY

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PREFACE

MANY books have been written about China by Europeans. The present volume is a book about China by two Chinese. They are, moreover, Chinese who have had considerable opportunities of studying other forms of civilization than their own, having lived in England as students for some years. Mr. Tao obtained the B.Sc. degree in Economics at the University of London in 1913, and is now lecturing on Sociology in the University of Peking. Mr. Leong took the same degree in 1914, and is still a student in the Sociological Department at the London School of Economics. Both have interested themselves especially in social philosophy and the comparative study of institutions, so that if they justly regard their own institutions with the feelings of patriotic Chinese, they are able equally to see them in relation to the customs of other peoples, and to review their merits and defects with a certain detachment. No doubt their point of view is not always that of the English reader. But, on the other hand, the point of view of Europeans who write on China is not that of Chinese, and for the full understanding of a great Empire, which,

politically and commercially, is becoming year by year a matter of greater importance to the West, the Chinese point of view is essential. No one is better fitted to give it to us than the Chinese student, educated in English ways, and particularly in English social thought, and yet remaining heart and soul a Chinese.

The book falls into two parts. Mr. Leong describes village life, the family, the clan, and the village society.¹ Mr. Tao deals more particularly with town administration and social life, and with the popular side of Chinese Buddhism. There is inevitably a little repetition here and there, because the pattern of Chinese society is strikingly uniform, and the town is nothing more than an enlarged village or agglomeration of villages, while the village itself is a state in miniature. In both the family as a great undying corporate unity, embracing the ancestors, the whole body of the living kindred, the unborn members who are to maintain its honour and perpetuate the memory of the forefathers, reveals itself as the heart of the Chinese social structure. Neither writer can get far from the family for long, whatever topic he is discussing, for all Chinese custom, all literature, ethics, art, religion, and government itself, start from the family life and end in it again. The central government, which has for centuries had a tribe of

¹ In Mr. Leong's chapters, a few passages have been included (by kind permission of the Editor) from an article by Mr. Tao in the *Sociological Review* (1913), on "The Family in China."

barbarian invaders at its head, and is now, since the Revolution, hovering between despotism and disorder, falls in their account to the secondary place which is its due. The China that European statesmen know is the China of the official hierarchy, and how under such a hierarchy peace and civilization have maintained themselves through thousands of years, in a population as great as that of Europe, might well have puzzled diplomatists, if diplomatists ever concerned themselves with questions of intellectual or social interest. But the real China is not a centralized despotism, whether monarchical or republican in form, but a great aggregate of democratic communities, ordering their affairs peacefully and happily in the main, through the government of the heads of families. To the European observer the Chinese family is apt to appear mainly as an archaic structure, which may have served its turn in the past but is now an obstacle to progress. Its cult of ancestors figures as a variant on the primitive belief in ghosts; the authority of the father is held to imply the degradation of women, and the solidarity of the whole the repression of individual enterprise. Our writers give us the other side of the shield. They dwell on the ethical value of the family life, the spirit of personal self-sacrifice, derided in modern Europe, on which it rests; the provision for the aged, the poor, or the helpless which it affords; the colour and life that it gives even to foreign religions such

as Buddhism. They present the position of the Chinese woman in a new light, as enjoying a reality of authority and power, qualified only, in their view, by a technical inferiority of position. They show how family feeling is the great restraint on misconduct and crime, the stimulus to public service or literary distinction. They point out that if the family union has retarded commercial advance, it has hitherto saved China from our "social problem."

That the Chinese social order is destined to great modification by the inrush of Western ideas, they are aware. Commercial industrialism is the doom of the modern world. Japan has succumbed, and China will not escape. The intelligent Chinese patriot of the present day is doing his utmost to qualify himself for the guidance of his country in its new perils. In the past China has absorbed many waves of barbarism, and, like captive Greece, has taken captive its wild conqueror. It has now the harder task of absorbing an immigrant civilization, stronger materially than itself, wielding the arms of applied science, and approaching it with the *finesse* of diplomacy, the subtle encroachments of financial "assistance" and capitalistic exploitation. (Thoughtful Chinese are aware of the insufficiency of the Confucian teaching to meet the intellectual demands of the new China. They know that it is the centre of this teaching, the soul of the family which is menaced. They seek to learn alike from

the successes and failures of the West, to interpret Europe to China and China to Europe; and among European lands they come first and foremost to England. English is becoming for them the language of education.¹ There is, it would seem to me from my own small experience, a certain affinity which makes it very easy for English and Chinese to understand one another and get on together, in spite of all the differences which the development of thousands of years engender. They recognize a certain honesty of intention in the English foreign policy, and look on England as the classical home of the political and social experiments which are to be forced upon them. These chapters will serve their authors' purpose if they help Englishmen to see the life of China as the Chinese see it, and therefore to appreciate something of the anxieties and the needs of a people whose fabric of life is shaken by novel and overwhelming forces, and who have upon them the heavy task of remodelling without destroying that which has conserved from an immemorial past, along with much that is rude and obsolete, certain elements of a simple and spontaneous harmony, that have long been lost and are not yet replaced in the Western World.

L. T. HOBHOUSE.

¹ Chinese and Japanese students, I find, habitually converse in English, and Chinese even use English in writing to one another. The teaching at the Pekin University is partly conducted in English.

PART I

THE INTERNAL WORKING OF A
CHINESE VILLAGE

VILLAGE AND TOWN LIFE IN CHINA

CHAPTER I

THE POLITICAL POSITION OF THE VILLAGE WITHIN THE EMPIRE

POLITICALLY China is governed in a hierarchical order with the central government at the top. Under the old regime the Emperor was the supreme ruler. His will was law. All State officials were responsible to him. There was no restriction whatever upon his power. He was answerable only to heaven. Beneath this central government are the provincial governments. Within the province the Viceroy or the Governor is invested with supreme authority. He has full control over finance, the army, and the administration of justice. The province is divided into circuits, called "Taos," each administered by a Taotai. Under the Tao are prefectures of various degrees and importance: "Fus," "Chows," and "Tings"—each controlled by an official who is a Chi-Fu, or Chi-Chow, or Chi-Ting, as the case may be. Chi-Fu literally means one who knows or manages the "Fu." The prefectures in turn are

divided into sub-prefectures, governed by sub-prefects called Chi-yuens. The Chi-yuen is the only official who is in immediate contact with the people. He fulfils many functions, from reporting upon the weather and market prices to gathering taxes and trying civil and criminal cases.¹ The sub-prefecture is itself divided into districts called Sze, and the Sze into wards called Paos or Tus. This Pao or Tu often coincides with a town or village. In most cases several Paos or Tus make up a large town or city. In the Pao or Tu an Elder or one or more of the local gentry fulfils almost the same functions of an English justice of the peace. He is usually appointed by the people and approved by the local officials, while a Ti-pao discharges the duties of bailiff. He is as much under the control of the Elder as under that of the local officials. He is held responsible for all the less serious crimes committed within the Pao or Tu. He also fulfils the office of notary in witnessing deeds, etc. In a word, he is a man who is supposed to know all about the people and everything of his Pao or Tu. To him the runners apply when sent to make arrests.² This briefly is the position of the village in the Empire politically. It generally coincides with a Pao or Tu.

But in its actual working China is a huge republic within which are myriads of petty republics. For

¹ See pp. 49-60 below.

² See pp. 62-64 below.

the village in China is an autonomous unit. Nominally it is governed by the central government through a hierarchical series of officials, as is described above. But actually, with the exception of paying a nominal land-tax and in a few other cases, the village is as independent of the central government as any British self-governing colony is independent of the Imperial Government. This may sound strange, especially when it is remembered that the principles of government are those of unmixed despotism even under the present regime and its laws are enforced by such a minute gradation of ranks and subordination of officials that it partakes more of the nature of a military system than that of a civil government. Be this as it may, the village in China is less governed than any other in the world. In China the central government plays but an infinitesimally small part in the village life. The village has perfect freedom of industry and trade, of religion, and of everything that concerns the government, regulation, and protection of the locality. Whatever may be required for its well-being is supplied, not by Imperial Edicts or any other kind of governmental interference, but by voluntary associations. Thus police, education, public health, public repairs of roads and canals, lighting, and innumerable other functions, are managed by the villagers themselves. In fulfilling such a gigantic network of duties a village inevitably comes in contact with other

villages, sometimes in friendly and occasionally very hostile relations. Thus a sort of inter-village commercial treaties arise between, and aggressive and defensive alliances are entered into by, a considerable group of villages. Occasionally there may even be war between two groups of villages. Should such an event happen it would be wise policy for the local officials not to stop it by force of authority but by the persuasion and mediation of a humble peace-maker. In the following pages, however, I shall confine myself to the description of the internal working of the Chinese village.

THE INTERNAL WORKING OF THE VILLAGE.

(a) *The Family.*

The internal working of a Chinese village may be studied from various points of view, but the most convenient method is to study it from the three centres of union : the family, the ancestral hall, and the village temple.

The Chinese family is described as based on the patriarchal system, *i.e.*, having the father as the head of the family and each family constituting an independent social unit. This is theoretically true ; but it is an extremely inadequate description and needs a great amount of qualification. In theory the father of the family is supreme in his authority. In practice, however, the mother is the centre of domestic life. She rules and controls the family.

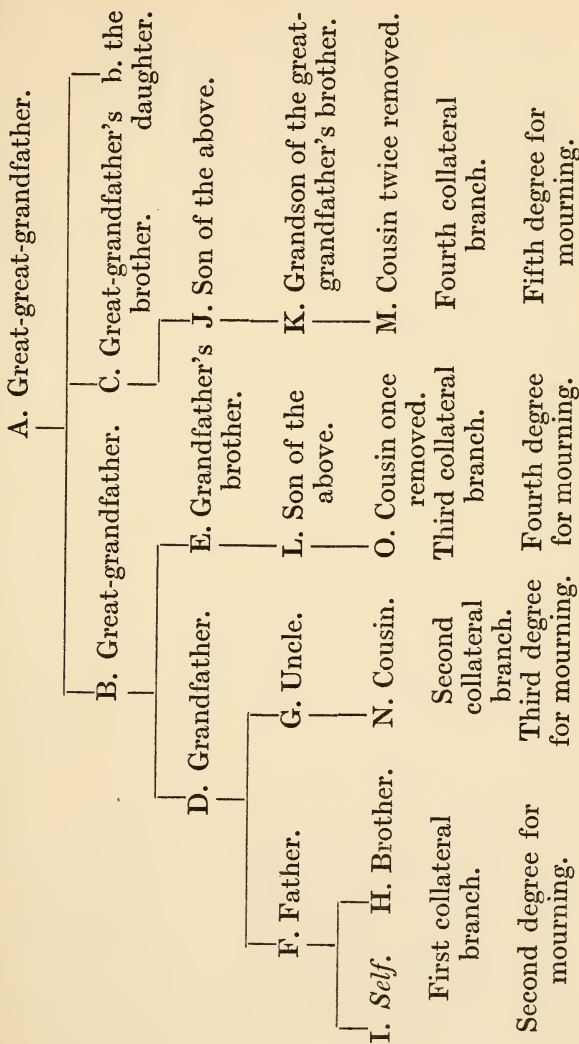
The father, as far as the internal working of the family is concerned, retains merely a theoretical power. Thus it is the mother who generally decides such important questions as when the child is to begin schooling. She finds the bride or the husband for the children respectively, and arranges all the matters concerning their betrothals. She manages all the business of the home and directs all the social and extremely punctilious relations with friends and kin. She sees that all the ceremonies such as those of marriage, birth, and death, the proper degree of respect due from one member of the family to another, the regular keeping of festivals, etc., are duly observed according to the "Chia-li-pu," i.e., a book of family laws both moral and ceremonial peculiar to each family. Thus it is very far from the truth to imagine that in Chinese life the position of woman is low. On the contrary, woman occupies in our actual life a very exalted position. The mother of the family is on an equal footing with the father. Thus an equal amount of respect and degree of mourning are due to either of them from the other members of the family, and in their mutual relations the wife is in no way inferior¹ to the husband. The

¹ In former days, when a girl was married, she paid less reverence to her parents than before she left her father's house. The *Book of Rites (Liki)* prescribed that the married daughter should wear mourning of the second degree only for her own parents, but of the first degree for her parents-in-law. This practice has been entirely changed in the course of time. To-day a married woman, in theory at least, belongs equally to the two houses, because she wears the same degree of mourning for her own parents as for her

part played by the mother of the family necessarily differs from that played by the father. By a wise division of labour she controls the internal affairs of the home while the father occupies himself mainly with the duties of earning a livelihood for the family and maintaining the honour of his ancestors.

The family multiplies as the children grow up and marry. It is not uncommon for the joint household to consist of four or five generations (see diagram), or, if we include collaterals, of from ten to fifteen groups. The increase of numbers depends, of course, upon the fecundity of the parents, but adoption is allowed if there is no offspring. The Chinese are, as a rule, disinclined to allow a line to die out; and it is important to note that not only the perpetuation of the family but the continuation of the direct line requires adoptive parents-in-law. Mourning in China plays a very important part in the social life. It has been very exhaustively and accurately treated by Professor De Groot in his laborious work, *The Religious Systems of China* (vol. ii); and here it is necessary only to point out that the changed position of woman is illustrated in a marked degree by the difference between the ancient and modern rules of mourning. In the archaic code, deep mourning was worn only for the father; now it is worn for both parents. Professor De Groot has rightly observed: "The aim of the official rescripts on mourning being in the first place to foster in the clan (*i.e.*, members from paternal great-great-grandparents down to great-great-children) subjection to parents and elders, and also coherence and mutual devotion between its members, it is natural that the registers should contain but few kinsmen who are members of other clans." Hence there are even punishments prescribed for the neglect of mourning. This may seem grotesque and strange to Western ears, yet among the people where the family is the social unit and ancestor-worship forms the chief cult the regulation is of obvious value in preserving the efficient organization of society. Its utility must not be too lightly dismissed.

DIAGRAM OF THE FAMILY.



tion. In higher circles concubinage may be tolerated merely for the purpose of rearing the young, but adoption would appear to be more prevalent. The fear of a line's discontinuance is doubtless involved in the cult of ancestor-worship, since the ghost must needs be served with offerings by the descendants; or, in the words of the Chinese, "the *hun*-soul must be appeased." There is, moreover, the economic factor to be reckoned with, for the son, or sometimes even the daughter, provides support for the parents when they become advanced in age. The son-in-law is generally called "half-son" in relation to the parents-in-law. Public opinion (not law) obliges him to support his parents-in-law if they are left without children and are in want. These two considerations, religious and economic, explain why marriage and the upbringing of offspring become a duty incumbent upon every Chinese who is normally fit for marriage; and as the young people do not make betrothals themselves, the duty falls upon the parents.

In a village the well-to-do family is a rare exception, and the typical family is the working-class family. The father is, as a rule, a husbandman, and the sons follow his footsteps. If they do not possess a piece of land of their own they cultivate either the land of the ancestral hall, of the village temple, or that of any private owner. The mother, daughters, and daughters-in-law do the household

work together, and also add considerably to the family income by such employment as may be carried on in the home. The earnings of all the members of the family are given to the mother in a hotch-potch for the maintenance of the corporate whole. The family from our point of view is a living organism which possesses a spirit quite apart from the individuals who form it. Each member does not live and work for himself, but for the family to which he belongs. Every other member has a claim on his earnings. Thus in its economic aspect the Chinese family is not unlike the monastic system of Christianity, in which anyone's earnings are for the good of all. So a sort of socialism is practised within the family, while at the same time the system does not sacrifice the individual. Unlike the Roman patriarchal family, all the minor members of the Chinese family are persons and not chattels, whose rights and duties are well defined. It is sometimes said that our family system drags down the individual from self-development. This is to judge the working of an Eastern system by the logic of the West. With us self-development is by no means sacrificed for the good of the family. In fact, from our point of view, the good of the family demands self-development. "The tranquillity and happiness of the world depends on rightly governed states. A rightly governed state necessitates well-regulated families. A well-regulated family is made possible only by the self-

culture of the individuals composing it.” (*The Great Learning.*)

X The family is collectively and directly responsible for the crimes of each member. The amount of responsibility varies according to the nature of the crime. In certain serious cases such as treason, the crime of one member may bring even capital punishment upon the whole family irrespective of the sex or age of the members. This extreme principle of vicarious punishment was in force up to comparatively recent times. The existence of such a ruthless principle may be accounted for by the presumption that the misdeeds of an individual are due to the connivance or negligence of his family. Another reason may be that crimes are believed to be largely the result of heredity and domestic environment. Hence the punishment must strike the evil at its root. It is indeed a most effective but terrible deterrent.¹ Incidentally it may be mentioned here the great importance we attach to heredity. Thus “san-tai”—i.e., an account of one’s parents up to three generations—must be given in every government examination and exchanged in betrothals. Before a betrothal is definitely arranged each party sends confidential agents to verify the “san-tai” of the other unless it is already known.

The nexus of the family organism is the parents,

¹ The family, however, is not legally responsible for the civil liabilities of its members. But in actual practice it will always discharge such liabilities if its means allow.

or one of them. New families arise when the old one is broken up, and this happens only when both parents are dead. As long as either the father or mother is living the family still exists, and no new families are recognized irrespective of the age of the children. It very often happens that even after the death of both parents the old family still continues to exist for a considerable time under the guardianship of the eldest brother. Such a case happens when either some of the brothers are too young or some of the sisters are still unmarried. The brother then who steps into the shoes of the father of the family has heavy responsibilities. The rights and duties of the father of the family now rest on him. Thus it is his duty to get his brothers and sisters properly married and settled, and in the case of the sisters a suitable dowry, according to the means of the family, must be provided for each.

The family property, both real and personal, is vested in the father. After his death, if the family continues to exist, it vests in the eldest son, who steps into the rights and duties of the father. If there is a division of the family the property is divided equally amongst the sons. The law of primogeniture is unknown except that if the eldest son should have male issue before the other sons during the lifetime of one or both of the parents, and if this grandson is living at the time of division, he is entitled to a double share. Should

any of the sons be deceased at the time of division the deceased is represented by his male issue for the purpose of division. The sons taking directly take *per caput*, i.e., the property is divided among them by the head; while those who take by representation take *per stirpem*, i.e., the parent's share is divided among the male issue who represent him. Thus if A, the father of a family, dies leaving B and C, two sons, surviving, and E and F, the male issue of D, a deceased son: B and C will take one-third each, E and F each will have half of D's one-third—i.e., one-sixth each by representation. The daughters being married before the family is broken up and now belonging to other families, are entitled to no share beyond the dowries they get at the time of their marriage.

Should the father of the family have no male issue, and this is considered most unfortunate, the gap must be filled up by adoption. The principle of adoption varies according to the customs of each clan. Thus in the same village the different clans (if there are more than one) may adopt different rules. Thus some do not permit adoption from outside the clan. Others again, as a rule small and poor, permit this on condition of a substantial gift made to the ancestral hall. This is only reasonable, for if a person outside the clan is adopted he and his descendants are thereby entitled to all the privileges, often pecuniary, given to the members of the clan. Within the limits of the clan custom

the father of the family is free to adopt whom he likes irrespective of the remoteness in relationship of the person adopted. In fact, a total stranger may be adopted if the clan customs so permit. But should he die without making any provision of adoption then a fictitious adoption is made. The nearest male relative who is one generation younger than the deceased and of the same clan comes forward and performs publicly all the duties as continuator of the ancestral line of the deceased. This may give rise to very complicated disputes, especially where there is a substantial inheritance. But such disputes are settled by all the elders of the clan forming the clan tribunal.

The rules of adoption incidentally throw light upon the autonomous character of the Chinese village. They reveal the fact that in spite of express laws enacted by Imperial Edicts village and clan customs prevail. It is provided by the Imperial Law that "a man having no male issue shall choose the continuator of his line among those who are of the same clan, beginning with his father's issue, next with his relatives in the first degree, next with those in the third degree, and lastly with those in the fourth degree; upon the failure of these he is at liberty to choose whomsoever he may prefer among those of the same clan. Whoever appoints the continuator of his line unlawfully shall be punished with 80 blows." Further, it is provided that "whoever adopts a person outside the clan is

guilty of confounding family distinctions and shall therefore be punished with 60 blows.” (Ta Tsing Leu Li, Sec. 78.) It need hardly be added that such enactments are not, as far as the village is concerned, the rules of adoption, and that they are impotent and remain a dead letter before the iron rigour of the village and clan customs.

Filial piety is the first commandment and precept of the family. For instance, it is the most important duty of the children, including the daughters-in-law, to see that their parents suffer no want and that no sorrow nor care and anxiety may tread their path. “Parents,” said Confucius, replying to a query respecting filial piety, “ought to bear but one trouble—that of their own sickness.” It was also a saying of Confucius that “Children should not wander far while their parents are still living; and if they happened to wander they should at least have some fixed address.” After the death of the parents it is the duty of the sons to glorify their spirits, to continue their line, and to bring no discredit nor dishonour to it. Reverence and love for our parents are instilled into us from the moment we first saw light. To the babies are taught the lives of men and women distinguished for their filial piety instead of nursery rhymes. The virtues of filial piety are so ingrained into us that to our mind there is no greater moral fault than offence against one’s parents. Filial piety is enforced with serious

sanctions within the family and the clan. In serious transgressions the transgressor may be brought before the clan tribunal, composed of the elders of the clan. This tribunal may order different degrees of punishment according to the nature of the transgression, from mere admonition with respect to the transgressor's conduct to blows with the lesser or larger bamboo, and excommunication from the clan.

The second rule of life in a Chinese family is love and loyalty to one's brothers. To be spoken of by one's kinsmen as a "dutiful son," and to be called a "good brother" by the folks of one's neighbourhood are, according to Confucius, good testimony of a virtuous man. The importance we attach to this virtue of love and loyalty to one's brothers may be gathered from a popular proverb of our's which says, "brothers are like hands and feet; wives and children are but like wearing apparel." However, this is not to be interpreted literally. It only shows that, to us, the word "brother" means more than what is connoted by the word in other nations. As to wife and children, human nature is such that no system of ethics will cause other human ties to be considered dearer and more tender than these. The importance we attach to the virtue of love and loyalty to brothers is not without reason. Without it our family system will not work. It is this virtue together with that of filial piety which enables our family system to with-

stand the test of centuries. Individualism is gradually creeping in as is pointed out in an article in the *Sociological Review*, but whether it will effect any change or modification in our family system remains to be seen in the future. But so much is certain : in so far as it effects the two cardinal virtues of our domestic life, filial piety and brotherly love, so will it produce similar effects on our family organization. Hitherto our rule of life as is taught us from our mother's knee to the schoolroom has ever been this : " Be filial at home, and respectful towards your elders when away from home ; be circumspect, be truthful ; let your love go out freely towards all, cultivate goodwill to men. And if in such a walk there be time or energy left for other things, employ it in the acquisition of literary or artistic accomplishments." Whether such a rule needs reformulating will be a problem that will soon knock at our door.

Here a few words may be said on the education of girls in the Chinese family. It is often said that girls in the Chinese family are considered inferior to boys. Such a statement may be accounted for by erroneous interpretation of our mode of conduct and expressing ideas. For instance, our mode of educating girls, at least in former times, is certainly unlike that adopted in the West. Ours may be a wrong method, but we use it not because we consider girls inferior to boys. Such a notion is most remote from our mind. It is given them

because, according to our ideas it best suits them, just as in the West a special training is given to a boy who is going to take up a particular profession. With us all girls are potential mothers of families, and a method of education with that end in view is accordingly adopted. It is a moot point whether our method of educating girls is superior or inferior to that adopted in the West. To us, at least to the village folks, education does not necessarily include the mechanical appliance of reading and writing. It rather consists in the apprehension of lofty ideas and the understanding of the philosophy of life. It is this form of education which gives the Chinese labourer those characteristic qualities which are so well known all over the globe: his dogged perseverance, his incessant cheerfulness in extreme hardships, his marvellous contentedness, his love for orderliness and extraordinary intelligence. The moral and economic value of such qualities are immeasurable. Again, it is this form of education which enables a Chinese girl to manage a family at an age when a girl in the West has scarcely left off schooling. (It often happens that the mother of the family, either through ill-health or old age, delegates all her duties to her daughter-in-law.) As a rule she knows just so much reading as to be able to decipher her husband's name and her own, and to understand the figures in house-keeping accounts. She is well versed in the arts of cooking. She makes all her own personal

apparel, and those of her husband and children. The tailor is seldom or never patronized, and shoes and headgear are made at home. In a word, there is not a single art of domestic economy of which she does not possess practical knowledge. In addition to fulfilling all these multifarious duties, she adds considerably to the family income by such employments as embroidery, needlework, weaving, and the like. On the other hand she is not without literary culture, though she may be ignorant as regards reading and writing. She is familiar with beautiful literature, not by reading, but by hearing from minstrels and from those who know. It is a common recreation for women and girls while at their work to listen to minstrels, as a rule aged and blind, singing to them the classics of Chinese poetry, romances and legends, and historical chronicles, and very often when no minstrels are at hand they each sing in turn, and all from memory. As they generally cannot read, their powers of memory are marvellously developed. It is quite an ordinary thing for a girl to repeat from memory word for word a poetical legend of several thousand lines after having heard it but several times. I wonder whether an average factory girl in England would be able to recite off-hand a stanza from Shakespeare or any other poet. But the poetries of Li Tai Peh and Su Tong Po are on the lips of all our village women folks. An average girl, too, has frequently to exercise her powers of com-

position. On the marriage or death of relatives and friends she has to recite extempore appropriate verses of her own on such subjects as the sorrows and joys of life, the virtues of filial piety, friendship, and so on.

These, then, are briefly a few of the leading characteristics of the Chinese family system. On some of the moral aspects of the system, and on its social and political functions, more will be said in dealing with Town Life.

CHAPTER II

THE ANCESTRAL HALL

THE ancestral hall is a sort of memorial temple in which the ancestral spirits of the clan are honoured, and the days of their birth and death commemorated. It is also the family house of the whole clan. The clan is merely a gathering of families. Throughout the length and breadth of China villages are called after the name of the clan inhabiting them : for instance, *Wangchatsuan*, the village of Wang ; *Lichatsai*, the camp of Li. In South China and Middle China especially great clans often live for centuries together, each having an illustrious and eventful history of its own. It should not, however, be inferred that the families of a clan always cluster in a village ; for very often the village consists of a number of families bearing different surnames. The members of the whole clan generally number hundreds and sometimes thousands. They usually have a common ancestral temple ; otherwise they have a common ancestral temple where only very remote ancestors are worshipped, while each family has its own temple of

ancestors pertaining to its own branch. Within a clan, the different families may be rich or poor, but as a rule the families that are better off work collectively to relieve the poor families of the same clan. The clan may jointly possess property, the income from which covers the expenses of ancestral worship and the repair of graveyards.

In the ancestral hall, as a memorial temple, there are elaborate rituals and ceremonies observed in the various festivals of the year, on which occasions all the members of the clan present themselves before the ancestral tablets to pay their respects to their ancestors. The temple has several divisions. In the central division is the memorial tablet of the remotest ancestor of the clan and his wife. To the right and left of this are the divisions for the memorial tablets of the sons of the remotest ancestor and their wives respectively. Thus supposing A is the remotest ancestor, or rather the ancestor who established the present clan, he having through some cause migrated from his own clan, and B and C are the two sons : the memorial tablet of A and his wife will occupy the central division ; B being the elder son, the memorial tablet of him and his wife will occupy the division on the left ; that of C and his wife will occupy the division on the right. As a memorial temple the ancestral hall owns property to enable the rituals and ceremonies of the various festivals to be carried out from generation to generation. Twice a year, spring and autumn, the

tombs of the ancestors are visited by the whole clan, while each family visits the tombs of its immediate ancestors. On such occasions there is public holiday for the whole clan. Sumptuous feasts are provided before the ancestral tombs, and pocket money distributed to all present. Portions of the feast are also sent to the various families, so that the wives and daughters of the clan may take part in the festival in their homes.

As a family house the ancestral hall is the central stock from which all the families of the clan spring, like the branches from a tree. It is the archetypal home, the home of the remotest ancestor from whom the clan can trace its descent. Thus the whole clan is but a family with the ancestral hall as its home. Every male member of the clan traces his descent from the common ancestor. In the Chia-li-pu (mentioned above), kept in each family, is recorded the genealogy of the family ancestors, with a short account of each up to the common ancestor of the clan. The whole clan then being but a huge family, it follows that all the members of the clan have equal rights and duties towards the ancestral hall. The duties are the due observance of the clan customs and morals, to be present at the various festivals, to aid other members of the clan whose rights are infringed upon by outsiders, to pay due respects to the elders of the clan, to render pecuniary and such-like assistance to clansmen who are in real necessity through

no moral faults of their own, and a host of others which the welfare of the clan community demands. Moral rules for the proper regulation of the conduct of the members of the clan are publicly posted up in the ancestral hall with the various sanctions attached for the breach thereof. All these rules of conduct and the various duties are strictly enforced by the tribunal of elders. With regard to the rights of the members of the clan their duties, of course, involve corresponding rights. But as the numbers increase, and the clan grows in size, everyone cannot expect to claim the same amount of beneficial rights from the ancestral hall as he may from his immediate family. Hence a method is necessary for the equitable distribution of the income derived from the ancestral property. The method devised is that all male members of the clan are entitled to an equal share irrespective of age, and also all widows. All those who are 59¹ years of age and over are entitled to a double share, a sort of old age pension being thus provided for. The reason for not including female members who are not widows is that they are either wives whose husbands are still living, or they are daughters. The former need not have a share apart from their husbands and sons, whereas the latter will eventually be married outside the clan,

¹ Anticipating the reaching of 60, which is a great event. Among some clans there is a sort of progressive old age pension, *i.e.*, those who reach the age of 69 will have their shares trebled and those who reach 79 quadrupled, and so on.

thus belonging to other clans. Exogamy is strictly observed. The benefits distributed generally take the form of money, feasts, fowls, and meat. These are distributed annually on the eve of various festivals, the only condition being that the members must be present at the ancestral hall, or at least send proxies. Everyone is proud of the share he is entitled to, not so much for the thing itself, though as a rule it is very substantial, especially when the clan is rich, but for the fact that it links oneself with a family greater than one's own, namely, the clan. He feels he is not alone. Here what Mr. Tao¹ calls "the instinctive craving" for the past, for one's origin, can express itself, even if not completely satisfied. For he can trace his ancestry further back than any English noble family can. Moreover, he knows that his individual rights and privileges are more jealously guarded and protected by his fellow clanfolks than they would be under any system of official government.² Another form of benefit given by the ancestral hall is free education to all the children of the clan. This is done, how-

¹ See his theory of ancestor-worship in "The Family System in China," *Sociological Review*, January, 1913.

² Those who think that Chinese make cowardly soldiers should see how the village folks fight for the rights and privileges of their fellow-clanfolks and fellow-villagers. Here they are fighting for tangible rights, the rights of their kinsmen and neighbours, and they readily give their lives. But when they are enlisted under bad pay and insufficient clothing and food you cannot expect them to give their lives for a despotic master who oppresses them and for a cause they do not know; leaving out of count the extremely low types, at least in former times, who generally present themselves as recruits.

ever, only in the case of prosperous clans. But all clans, whether prosperous or not, will invariably help any of their members who have the bent for public competitive examinations formerly given by the Government, but who have not the means to do so. To our way of thinking, honour to any person is honour to his clan and his ancestors. To glorify one's parents and ancestors is one of the most sacred duties for every Chinese. Hence it is that all those who are unable to glorify their ancestors by gaining public honours themselves, take great interest in assisting those who have the prospect of so doing. It is this love for ancestors and respect for the past that is chiefly responsible for the stability of our institutions, so inexplicable to outside observers. Besides these benefits most clans also provide for maternity benefits, old age and widow pensions, free doctoring and medicine, and free burial, thus anticipating much of the social legislation of Europe. As far as the villages are concerned social legislation is not needed, and organized relief unnecessary. But with the introduction of machinery and the opening up of the natural resources of the country, it is most essential for the central Government to exercise extreme care and diligence lest we fall into the same pitfalls as England and so many other European countries did at the time of the Industrial Revolution, resulting from the introduction of machinery. Already the introduction of machinery and factories

into the villages near Canton for the manufacture of silk is coupled with the degradation of morals, sweating, and oppression by the so-called captains of industry. Such evils must sooner or later be arrested, otherwise the opening up of our national wealth will inevitably be accompanied by the opening up of incurable wounds and sores in our national life.

The government of the ancestral hall, the management of its property and income, and of the distribution of benefits are regulated by a combination of hereditary and democratic principles. Twelve executive members are annually elected. They are distributed according to the hereditary principle thus : Supposing the founder of the clan had two sons B and C, half the number of members are distributed amongst the descendants of B and the other half amongst those of C irrespective of the number of descendants of B and C respectively.¹ At the annual election new members are proposed by the retiring ones and approved publicly by the whole clan. Although there is no remuneration attached to membership beyond a double share of the benefits annually distributed, yet sometimes things are very exciting and clan politics causes great commotion in the village. There is no balloting. The election is determined by all present at the moment. A member is proposed by a retiring

¹ This corresponds with the *per stirpem* principle in the division of property in the family.

member,¹ and it is then left to the public to approve or reject him. The villagers soon speak out their minds. The candidate will soon see whether there is much opposition or not. If there is it would be very unwise if he does not voluntarily retire. If the public disapproves of one candidate another is put in his place by the same retiring member, and so on till one is approved. On the other hand, if a person is unanimously elected there is no alternative but for him to accept the office. It is for him a sacred duty, a duty to his ancestors and his fellow-clansmen. The office is for one year. It is the duty of the executive members to manage the property of the ancestral hall. This consists in collecting rents, paying the necessary taxes, and letting out land which is as a rule agricultural. They have no power to dispose of any ancestral land. Such a step is rarely taken. Should it be considered necessary then at least three-fourths of the fathers of families of the clan must approve of the proceeding. The proceeds from it must at once be reinvested in other lands or be distributed equally amongst all the male members of the clan, irrespective of age, and widows, those who are 59 being entitled to a double share. Whatever step be taken, it is a question for the whole clan and not the executive members. It is also the duty of

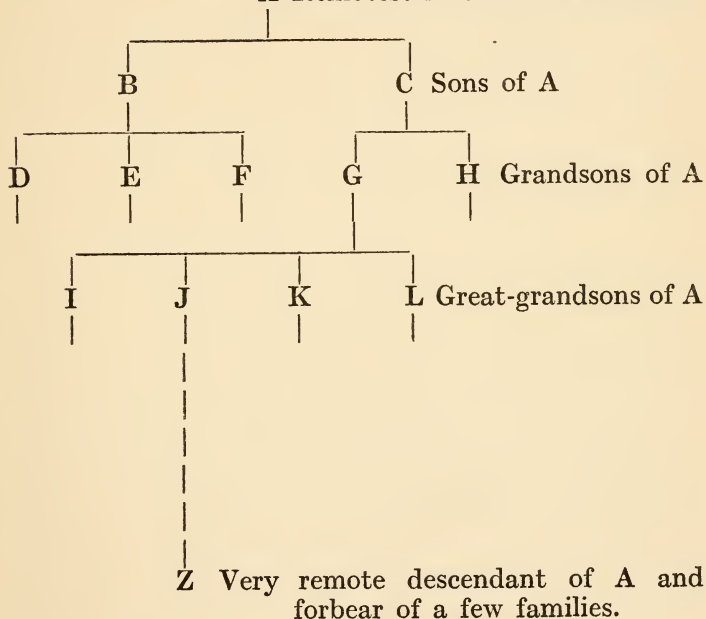
¹ That is, if the retiring member is one of the descendants of B in the above supposed case, he proposes one of the fellow-descendants of B. But the approval is by the whole clan, *i.e.*, all those who are present at the election.

the executive members to spend the money in the proper channels—such as the due performance of ceremonials to the ancestors at the different festivals, the proper distribution of benefits, and to keep the ancestral hall and tombs in proper repair. Before retiring they have to render their accounts publicly. Corruption is unknown. The land is let to the highest bidder every three years. The exact amount of income is publicly known, and every step of the expenditure thereof is publicly discussed.

Under the ancestral hall are numerous minor ancestral halls. A minor ancestral hall is one constituted by several families grouping together under one common ancestor. It is constituted on the same principle as the ancestral hall of the clan, only on a much smaller scale and including considerably fewer families within it. In fact, each home is a potential ancestral hall, for in it are the memorial tablets of its immediate ancestors. In time to come all the families springing from the present one will join together to honour their common ancestors under one ancestral hall. This tendency to have private minor ancestral halls in some cases leads to devoting the ancestral hall of the clan to the remotest ancestor only, his sons being honoured in minor ancestral halls belonging to their respective descendants. Thus within a clan you have a series of ancestral halls with fewer and fewer families under each as the series descends. In the diagram given

below, A, the remotest ancestor, will be the object of the central ancestral hall, embracing the whole clan under its fold; while B, C, D, etc., down to Z, the forbear of a few families, will each have a minor ancestral hall with their immediate descendants under it.

A Remotest Ancestor of the Clan.



CHAPTER III

THE VILLAGE TEMPLE

ANOTHER centre of Chinese village life is the village temple. The temple is, as a rule, dedicated to a deified mortal such as Kwan-ti, once a distinguished general, now a god of valour and loyalty; Peh-ti, a culture god and patron of tradesmen; Wen-Chang, god of literature and patron of schoolboys; Lung-wang, a rain god; and so on as the predilections of the village folks may decide. But the temple is more a centre of social life than that of religious life. To it the superstitious element of the village and the neighbouring villages come to pray for favours or to perform thanksgivings, as the case may be. It is thereby a source of considerable income. There is, however, no definite religious belief attached to the temple. It is difficult to define with any degree of accuracy what religious ideas are in the mind of an average Chinese villager. With his eminent good sense and practicality he has fused into one the old theistic doctrine and a modified form of Buddhism, "addressing his prayers¹ on rare occasions to the Lao-tien-ye, the venerable Lord of Heaven, He

¹ The use of prayer by the common people is distinctly Buddhistic in origin. In the primitive religion only the Emperor worships and sacrifices to the Supreme Being.

who sees and judges, punishes and rewards.” But at the same time he is subject to a thousand and one superstitions.¹ Confucianism, needless to say, is not a religion. It is a system of positive² ethical and political rules of conduct with a shadowy personal God in the background ; and, as is interpreted by the commentators such as Chu-hsi, it is pure materialism not unlike Haeckel’s system of “Kraft und Stoff.” Taoism pure and simple, on the other hand, has never found favour with the people. What is popularly known as Taoism is debased and mutilated and full of superstitious practices, borrowing at the same time a good deal from Buddhism.

To come back to the village temple, it has more resemblance to the English town hall than to the parish church. It is the common centre of social life for all the villagers irrespective of their clans. The village temple is also the centre from which radiates the network of relations with other villages and the central government. It would be beyond the scope of this essay to do more than merely indicate in the barest outline a few of these external relations. The inter-village treaties and alliances are entered into by the various village temples. So also complaints are made to and redresses obtained through the village temple if a stranger should suffer any grievance from the villagers.

¹ L. Wieger, S.J., *The Religion of China*, p. 23. (Eng. trans.)

² In the Austinian sense.

Again, the village elders and *literati*, who are at the same time officers of the temple, are recognized by officials of the central government. These and the Chi-yuen are the connecting links, in some cases extremely weak indeed, between the village and the central government. In a word, externally the village temple represents the government of the village. It enters into complicated relations both hostile and friendly for the village. It is responsible for the conduct of the villagers to outsiders. It is also nominally responsible to the central government for the good government of the village.

But the chief importance of the village temple lies in the part it plays in the internal life of the village. Although the fiction of a corporation with its perpetual succession and common seal is unknown to the Chinese villager, yet the Chinese village temple is not unlike an English municipal corporation. It enjoys perpetual existence. It acts through officers, who are annually elected.¹ It owns property. It can buy and sell and enter into contracts. I have compared it above to the English town hall. In many respects, however, it resembles the English county council. It has about the same sort of administrative functions, such as education (if not already taken up by the ancestral halls), police, repairs of roads, etc. In

¹ There are other officers besides those annually elected, as will be seen later.

addition to the administrative functions it also exercises through different officers judicial functions in petty criminal cases, and not infrequently it disposes of serious cases such as robbery without referring to the central authorities as is required by the Imperial laws. In a word, it does practically for the village what the county council and quarter sessions together do for the English county.

The officers of the village temple are elected by a somewhat different method to that adopted in the case of the ancestral hall. For administrative purposes the village is divided into from six to about twelve divisions of more or less equal size, according to the extent of the area and population of the village. On an average each division has from 200 to 500 inhabitants. Two or three officers are allotted to each division. Every father of a family is entitled to be officer of the temple and is given an opportunity to offer his services for the public good. Every office goes round from house to house by rotation. Thus, suppose the division of a village consists of one long street and two officers are allotted to the division, then the offices will go round in this manner: The two fathers of families of the first two houses will be first offered the two offices. They will be at liberty to accept or not. In any case, they will not have the opportunity again till all the other houses have had a chance of the office. If they do not accept, the two offices will go to the other houses following

in numerical order. If there happens to be a shop, then it is the owner or manager of the shop who is entitled to the office. Should the owner or manager accept the office the shop must cease all business dealings with the temple during the time the owner or manager is in office. The office is for a year, with only a nominal remuneration attached.

Besides these annually elected officers there is a small group of others who may be looked upon as counsellors. Their offices are more or less permanent, according to the popular feeling of the villagers. They are the influential elders and the *literati* of the village. It is difficult to define their exact position, for it chiefly depends upon the tacit understanding and common sense of the village community, as evidenced by usage and oral tradition. Their offices are due to their personal influence and also to the popular feeling of the villagers towards them. They are the leaders and mouth-piece of public opinion in the village. The actions of the administrative officers—that is, of those who are annually elected—are greatly influenced by their opinion and counsel. It is these influential elders and *literati* that are recognized by the officials of the central government. It is they who are the sole village authorities in the sight of the central government. Thus the judicial functions of the temple fall into their hands. It also rests with them to decide whether strangers

may come and settle within the village. They act, however, in the name of the temple, and not as possessing authority from the central government. For they are officers of the temple, and receive a nominal remuneration from it.

The annually elected officers, on the other hand, are not recognized by the government, and the functions they perform are purely administrative and unknown to the law. On the whole these two classes of officers of the village temple act in perfect harmony.

Before describing the functions of the village temple the sources of its income may be briefly indicated here. Like the ancestral hall, the temple owns agricultural lands, which are let out to the villagers irrespective of their clan. The market of the village is also a source of income, for it is generally held in front of the temple. Here the villagers may buy and sell freely every day. But strangers who wish to sell in the market must pay rent to the temple for their stalls. Another source of income to the temple is the temple itself. The temple is a great attraction to the superstitious element of the whole district, and hundreds flock to it every day. It is thereby a source of considerable income. For the realizing of this income the temple is annually farmed to the highest bidder. Thus the village temple is a fairly prosperous body, and frequently it is much richer than the ancestral halls individually.

The various functions of the temple may now be described briefly.

First, the temple provides for the annual festival of its patron. Like the temple itself, this annual festival has practically lost all its religious significance. Nominally it is celebrated in honour of the patron of the village, but in reality it is a social gathering, a sort of annual carnival. Theatres are staged before the temple, its surroundings all gorgeously decorated and illuminated, and the village folk, young and old, flock to the temple grounds to enjoy their annual merry-making. This annual festival is a great source of enjoyment to the villagers, and is therefore one of the most important items of expenditure which the annually elected officers of the temple must provide. Towards this expenditure a door-to-door collection is usually made, but subscription to it is voluntary.

Another important function of the temple is to provide for the proper police of the village. Every house must supply a man to the temple for watch duty for a certain number of days and nights in the year, each house being supposed to bear an equal share of the burden. But a small sum may be contributed in lieu of sending a man. Such contributions go towards paying those who do extra watch duties to make up the deficit. But in case of grave necessity, such as in fear of big gangs of robbers or a feud with neighbouring villages, all male members of the village from the age of 16

upwards may be called upon to do watch duty. It is for volunteers to attack, but all must defend their village and their homes. The temple in every case supplies the necessary equipments. In ordinary times the watch duty consists of patrolling the outskirts of the village and sounding the different hours of the night through the streets and lanes of the village. The latter is performed by beating a hollow bamboo with a certain number of strokes, according to the hour, and by calling out at intervals to the sleeping villagers to be mindful of fire and thieves.

Other functions of the village temple are to light certain public places and dangerous corners of the village, to repair the roads, canals, and landing-places, to furnish adequate defence works, etc. The village temple also supplies free schooling to the village children when it is either not carried out or inadequately supplied by the different ancestral halls. It may also supply free doctoring, medicine, and burial and suchlike relief works. These, then, briefly are the functions of the village temple, one of the most interesting of Chinese institutions. From the point of view of local government the village temple is an institution full of potentialities in the future if completely divested of its semi-religious and superstitious element.

It will be beyond the scope of this essay to indicate here the problems arising out of the

relations between the central government and the village. So much, however, may be said in conclusion : the Chinese village folks are most capable of self-organization and self-government. On the other hand, they are extremely jealous of external interference. (Reform, should any be needed, must come from within, and not from without.) Let the central government indicate to them a policy, give them a standard, and leave them to settle matters amongst themselves, and it will see its policy carried out with the minutest exactness and at practically no cost. Whereas if it should interfere with the government of the village in any shape or form through officials it will find itself in a sea of troubles. I do not say the central government cannot succeed in having its policy carried out. But the same can be done at infinitely less cost and trouble if the central government would do it with the co-operation of the village folks.

A word may be said here as to the economic aspect of Chinese village life. As a rule all the agricultural land around the village has been appropriated. The landowners may be divided into three classes—the village temple, the ancestral halls, and private individuals. The proportion belonging to each element varies. In general the larger proportion is owned by private individuals, while the land belonging to the temple and ancestral halls is invariably let to those who possess none of their own. The houses of the village are all

without exception privately owned. There is no demand whatever made on property by the village authorities beyond an occasional voluntary contribution. There is, however, a nominal tax imposed on land by the central government. But it is extremely slight, being only .08 ounce of silver on a "meu." A "meu" may be roughly estimated at about 1,000 English square yards.

On the whole, property is pretty evenly distributed, and the only economic problem that arises is that of over-population. This has hitherto been very inadequately and unsatisfactorily met by emigration. The doctrine of open-door has been forced upon China by the white races in the name of civilization. But the latter have very reluctantly practised what they preached with such vigour and passion—nay, even with fire and sword—in the nineteenth century.

But with the introduction of machinery and the opening up of the natural resources of the country doubtless a new channel will be found for the surplus population. And the standard of life will also be considerably raised. With this new solution of the problem, however, fresh problems will inevitably arise. So far both the clan system and the village organization have withstood the growth of towns. But whether they will suffer the same fate to which similar institutions in the West have succumbed time alone will tell.

PART II
THE TOWN ADMINISTRATION

CHAPTER I

THE TOWN ADMINISTRATION

THE administration in China, like everything else in that country, had undergone very little change since the feudal system was swept away and the central government was established. The district (hsien or yuen) created in the beginning of the Han Dynasty (206 B.C.) forms the administrative unit, in which officials are stationed to carry on civic, judicial, and fiscal affairs. It is generally as large as an English county, but the city itself, where the governmental body resides, is invariably surrounded by a city wall and is therefore much smaller. It is in the villages, scattered over the cultivated land, that the great majority of the Chinese people lead their quiet, uneventful lives in their homesteads. In point of fact, the villages are, with certain exceptions, very little interfered with by governmental action, although they are nominally under the jurisdiction of the magistrate. To what extent the Chinese villagers can govern themselves and how far the magistrate is privileged to coerce the village community are questions which

have been dealt with in previous chapters. For present purposes the reader must bear in mind that the administration of a district means that of a city and not more.

Patriarchy is the prototype of the Chinese government, from the Imperial Government under the old regime down to the district *yamên*. And from the emperor to the magistrate is formed a hierarchy, which is perhaps peculiar to the Chinese idea of government. The chief, whether he be the emperor or the viceroy, the prefect or the magistrate, is always responsible for the safety or security of the people; yet it is as representing the emperor that the officials are responsible, and it is as representing Heaven that the emperor looks after the welfare of the people. This has for centuries been the theory of the Chinese government, but, strangely enough, no theory of divine right has ever evolved from the ingenious explanation of the heavenly duty of the monarch. Mencius says: "Heaven sees what the people see; Heaven hears what the people hear." In short, the Chinese system is essentially patriarchal; and the patriarch apart, it is democratic. This is the so-called Chinese topsy-turvydom which, if its spirit is once grasped, is intelligible enough.

Let us, before dealing with the town administration, investigate the political structure of the province. Every province is, by itself, a hierarchy. The viceroy is responsible for the whole province

(sometimes for two or three provinces). He is invested with authority over civil as well as military affairs; he is free to contract a loan, to recruit an army, and to coin money. A written petition to the central government or the emperor would be the only necessary procedure for the viceroy. Financially a province remains independent; in proportion to its riches or poverty, the central government exacts from it a certain sum of money each year as contribution to the Imperial expenditure. In certain very poor provinces the yearly contribution is excused, and, instead, the Peking government gives them pecuniary assistance. The revenue of a province consists chiefly of land-tax, salt gabelle, and *likin* (that is a kind of transit-tax).

The viceroy is sometimes assisted by a governor, who, besides supervising the petty officials in the province, performs the same functions as a viceroy. The governor was primarily a superintendent of subordinates in the discharge of their duties, and his dignity, as we see it to-day, is only of later growth. It may be added that in certain provinces, where there is no viceroy, the governor takes his place.

The provincial treasurer collects land-taxes through the magistrate, compiles the decennial census,¹ and sends in the report to the Board of Finance. The highest court of appeal in a province is occupied by the provincial judge, who is of the

¹ See *infra*. A Quinquennial Census was taken in every district, and a decennial report was sent in to the Imperial government.

same rank as the treasurer. The official couriers who are responsible for the transmission of despatches are also under the control of the judge. The official courier service existed long before the modern postal system was introduced, but remains still for sending the urgent despatches.

Besides the viceroy, the governor, the provincial judge, and the provincial treasurer, as we have noted, there exist a number of *taotais*, each with his own duties, *e.g.*, the salt-intendant, waterways inspector, etc. *Tao*, properly speaking, means a circuit, and requires one prefect or more. In the latter case, the *taotai* is the immediate superior to the prefect, with whom we shall deal presently. As a rule, no *taotais* are appointed unless special attention to certain affairs is called for, such as salt monopoly, foreign trade, corn transportation, and the like. In another respect a *tao* differs according as it is "standing" or "travelling." As the term implies, a travelling *tao* resembles an inspector.

A province is divided into a number of prefectures, each having a prefect as its administrator. He may be compared to the chairman of the magistrates, though his rank is higher. According to the traditional theory, his business is restricted to the works of the waterways, agriculture, and horse-breeding, transport of corn, farming by the soldiers,¹ and the general administration. But his

¹ To turn soldiers, at the time of peace, into farmers and by

functions are in reality much lighter, as in most cases he has magistrates to share his work.

Under the prefect comes the magistrate of the district. It has been rightly said that to the mass of the people he is generally the embodiment of the government, for in the mind of the country folk, he is indeed omnipotent. His functions are manifold, and if we examine all the functions closely we may rest assured that none but an omniscient and superhuman being could occupy the office of a magistrate. The collector of India¹ might perhaps be taken as the only example which bears some resemblance to our magistracy. The resemblance, it is hardly necessary to add, lies in the fact that the Chinese magistracy also represents a paternal government, having all the different families under it as members of a bigger family.

diligent drill to turn them again into soldiers in time of war was a common practice in China. It was thought advisable because they could sustain themselves without greatly encumbering the Imperial government. A big standing army is also a menace to peaceful life.

¹ "As the name of collector-magistrate implies, his main functions are twofold. He is a fiscal officer, charged with collection of revenue from the land and other sources; he is also a revenue and criminal judge, both of first instance and appeal. . . . He does in his smaller local sphere all that the Home Secretary superintends in England and a great deal more, for he is the representative of a paternal and of a constitutional government. Police, jails, education, municipalities, roads, sanitation, dispensaries, the local taxation, and the imperial revenues of his district are to him matters of daily concern. He is expected to make himself acquainted with every phase of the social life of the natives, and with each natural aspect of the country. He should be a lawyer, an accountant, a financier, and a ready writer of State papers. He ought also to possess no mean knowledge of agriculture, political economy and engineering."—Sir William Hunter, p. 513, quoted by Sir John Strachey in his *India*, p. 392.

To trace back the origin of the magistrate, we find that, since the fall of feudalism, he, in place of the feudal lord, was delegated to look after the people. The classical name of his office may be most appropriately rendered as "pastor" of the people. His functions, therefore, consist chiefly in educating his subjects, and are perhaps not very much unlike the work of ancient Roman missionaries among the Goths and Germans. This accounts for the fact that severe and ruthless punishment, so far as possible, remains unused; eminent magistrates, historians tell us, treat punishment as the last resort, not because it is useless, but because they can hardly bear seeing the people punished. The maxim of the magistrate says: "Love your people as your sons." And his popular name is more commonly "Father and mother official."

In the administration of justice the magistrate represents the judge of the court of first instance in criminal and civil cases. In the case of murder—in fact, in every case that involves the death of a person—the *post-mortem* examination has to be carried on before his own eyes by an official coroner. The death-warrant for an execution is always issued by the provincial judge, whose decision, if the case is not brought before him, is based on the report of the magistrate. The latter may, however, in certain circumstances, inflict capital punishment at his own discretion, without

waiting for the warrant. His responsibility would, in that case, become so much greater that it may result in dismissal or even punishment.¹

A comprehensive account of the land under his jurisdiction is kept by the magistrate. Land-tax is collected every autumn. It may be remitted in a famine year by an Imperial Decree, and the people may, instead of paying the tax, get Imperial grants for relief. The lease of land is to be duly reported and registered, by paying an insignificant sum for registration. The sale of land, however, is liable to be taxed, the tax being paid by the buyer.

It may be interesting, though a digression from our main subject, to describe the character of our land-tax. Among the agricultural labourers, land-tax represents the only direct tax. It possesses a long and interesting history, dating back to feudal times, when the tax was paid in the form of labour by tilling the land of the overlord. Payment in kind was no doubt a later development, and has remained till very recent times. The popular name for land-tax now in use is "money and corn" (tsien liang), for the statutory exaction was determined by the quantity of corn. The land is generally classified—differently in different districts—into several categories, and the levy of the tax chiefly depends on the yield, which was assessed by the

¹ For particulars, see Alabaster, *Notes and Commentaries on Chinese Criminal Law*.

official surveyor. The payment of tax is liable to modification whenever a new survey is made. Apart from the difference of grades of land, there still exist other differences such as official land, "education land" (*i.e.*, land leased out to a tenant, where the rent is used for educational purposes), priest land (*i.e.*, demesne of a monastery or temple, etc.). As we see, the classification of land seems so complicated that corruption, unless there be efficient control and adequate means of collection, would be the inevitable consequence. The case is aggravated by the more favoured position of big landowners. It seems superfluous for us to follow the thorny problems of land-tax, small holding, and redistribution of land, which have been the constant theme of our writers on finance, but one fact has to be pointed out, that the present land-tax really represents two taxes.

Besides being a tax on the land, the levy forms also a poll-tax, which was incorporated with it in 1712. In olden days the frontiers of the Empire, especially the northern frontier, were garrisoned with soldiers, stationed for a term of three or five years, recruited compulsorily from the common people. The rich, the *literati*, and the sole heir of a family might be exempted by paying a certain sum to the government so as to cover the expense of a substitute. When the frontier garrison became less important a militia system for local self-defence developed in different districts. The militia, it is interesting to

note, might be called to do any service for public welfare, such as the construction of the dyke, the mending of the city wall. It was doubtless an efficient system of self-government in China, where local districts received practically no grant from the central government, and yet local affairs to be done were countless. Here again commutation was allowed by payment, and the failure of the system was perhaps but natural. This explains why the census was taken at a very early date in China, as early as the beginning of the Christian era. Since the Manchus came into power a quinquennial census was taken in all provinces till 1712. The poll-tax had become developed, and conscription or the militia system, as it was enforced in former dynasties, disappeared. The tax divides itself, according to the wealth of the family, into three grades, the unemployed being exempted. Seeing that the quinquennial reports, one after another, showed no substantial increase of population, and yet being fully aware that that must have been due either to the negligence of the official or to the insupportability of the tax by the people, the Imperial Government fused the land-tax and the poll-tax into one, and proclaimed that any further increase of population would be exempt from taxation (1714). The census was definitely dropped in 1812, and it remained unheard of till 1902.

As we have shown, the chief duty of a

magistrate consists in the administration of justice and the collection of the taxes.¹ Whenever he is transferred or newly promoted to a district, his attention is first of all called to these two things, such as cases impending for judgment, taxes that fall into arrears; but as a rule the last occupier of the office must have made everything as clear as possible, and the transfer of the business would be an easy one. It must not be thought that every magistrate is a lawyer as well as a financier—of course there are a minority, who have made a thorough study of law and taxation, and who can easily transact the business by themselves—for he generally employs two private secretaries, each being a specialist. The judicial secretary, a keen professional lawyer² with all the eminent cases in his head, gives counsel to the magistrate on technical points and prepares the report on all cases to the prefect or the provincial judge. The other secretary, who understands at a glance the old, filthy, and sometimes unintelligible documents of land registration and land taxation, controls the financial department of the district. The two

¹ Salt gabelle is not collected by the magistrate, as it belongs to a special official, subordinate to the Salt-Intendant. Salt is very heavily taxed at every stage—in its manufacture, purchase, transport, sale at the depôt, and sale to the people. Besides the land-tax, which contributes most to the revenue, the magistrate also controls the reed-tax, mining royalties (these being restricted to private mines where native method of mining is used), and pawn-brokers' and other mercantile licences.

² A Chinese lawyer is, or rather was, not what is understood by the term in this country. See Alabaster, *Notes and Commentaries on Chinese Criminal Law*.

secretaries, if not always indispensable, may nevertheless sometimes render some shadowy work behind the back of the magistrate, if the latter seems too amateurish or he is not vigilant enough.

The magistrate, being himself from the *literati* class, is expected to promote education among the people. As a rule every district has its own seminaries (shu-yuen), where, besides being a centre of education, periodical examinations are held under his auspices. Prizes in the form of money are distributed among those who excel others in competition. It must be made clear, however, that he does not, after all, represent the central government as an official of education, rather that he is delegated as an inspector. For we have in every district a director of education, who was, as the name implies, to direct the education of the people and to look after the official public schools, if there are any, but was unhappily degraded later into the chief registrar of the *literati*. Education in China, like anything else, was not subjected to departmental rules, prescribed in the form of White Paper, and the director of education finds no need to interfere with the people under such a *laissez faire* regime. The magistrate also conducts the matriculation examination of the candidates, who proceed for the first degree. Hence there is no conflict of duties between the two officials, one being an inspector, or a delegate

examiner, and the other a resident director of education.

Since the responsibility for the whole district lies solely on the shoulders of the magistrate, any event of importance must be taken into account by him. When his district is inundated he, though by no means an official responsible for waterways, is to appear on the scene and to assist, as a collaborator, the resident superintendent of the waterways. Every precaution against the locusts, a common nuisance to the farmers, is taken; in case there is an invasion of these insects he is to encourage catching and destruction. A famine may induce him to appeal to the higher authorities to excuse the land-tax for one year or even two. The famine-stricken people are relieved, as we have mentioned, either by the Imperial grant or by the local granary, but all the same he is present, though not always, at the soup kitchen. Every district has its chief constable (or "investigator"),¹ whose chief duty is to detect the thieves and robbers. Yet the magistrate cannot be excused if the robbers be a body at large. Public buildings such as city walls, prisons, official temples, are also under his care; every repair or re-building becomes his concern to look after. It is hardly necessary to exhaust every detail of the duty that our versatile magistrate has to discharge, but his capacity as the high priest of the people particularly demands our attention.

¹ Johnston, *From Peking to Mandalay*, p. 53.

It has been remarked that the magistrate stands in exactly the same position as the feudal lord in ancient times. The classical code tells us that the Emperor worships "Heaven and Earth" while the lord offers oblations to the "Mountains and Rivers." The magistrate, therefore, officiates in the religious service of nature-gods of a lower grade or such worthies as are officially permitted by the Emperor. Worship by the common people is practically denied with certain exceptions. If the system of representation did not find any place in the political life in China, it is at least true to say that it exists in religious worship from immemorial times. Nothing, perhaps, illustrates better the meaning of prayer and sacrifice by the high priest than the countless striking examples in Chinese history—*e.g.*, the overlord in a drought claimed the sin of his people to be his own, and prayed for rain at his own sacrifice. The chief gods in a district are the city god (*cheng huang*), god of agriculture, Kwanti, etc.¹ In a drought season, for instance, the magistrate proceeds to the temple of the Dragon King and prays for rain. All kinds of punishment are then suspended, and the prosecution is sometimes adjourned for a certain period. It must not be thought that every magistrate in this instance is an idolater or a believer in primitive animism; indeed, in a majority of cases he merely carries out the time-worn statutory rule on the

¹ This and its cognate subjects are most excellently described by Johnston, *op. cit.*

one hand, and on the other tries to appease the people who become dissatisfied and disquieted. Even among the people, perhaps, the ritual is held for amusement rather than for its efficaciousness.¹

The worship of Confucius is held twice every year, when all the officials and the *literati* take part. The Confucian temple, it must be remembered, is in fact a pantheon consisting, besides Confucius and his great disciples, of all the philosophers and writers, statesmen and sages (as, in fact, all Chinese great statesmen were great scholars, who adhered to the principles of the "Great Teacher"); all the unorthodox like Laotzu, Motzu, are banned. It is noteworthy, therefore, that the tablet of the scholar of one dynasty, deified in the "pantheon," may be taken out for some reason or another, and yet there is no reason to infer that the same scholar may not be readmitted at a later date. Deification of the sages² who partake of the oblations offered in the "pantheon" is, however, not arbitrary, as is suggested in our description. The dead sage is subject to strict scrutiny and investigation upon his writings, and particularly his life; the sanction is given by the Emperor on the recommendation of a council of savants, and admittance to the

¹ See Johnston, *op. cit.*, chap. xvii, and esp. pp. 408-9.

² Lyall, *Asiatic Studies*, II, chap. v. Deification of Confucian worthies is an entirely different matter. Deification of Confucian scholars is a national concern, yet a concern of the educated few. The term "deification" scarcely gives the right meaning. The worship, if rightly interpreted, seems to be merely an expression of gratification; it is hardly a religious worship.

“pantheon” is esteemed as extraordinary distinction.

On this occasion the magistrate is not distinguished as a high priest, nor are his superiors. For, all alike—officials as well as the poor *literati* who have unfortunately failed in the examination—are disciples of the “most-enlightened prince-of-great-perfection.” Social distinctions do not appear in his temple. The ceremonial is prescribed in the book and is generally faithfully followed. Ordinary dishes as well as sacrificial meat are offered, and *kow-towing* is performed; the remarkable feature is perhaps dancing and music. As we know, dancing is not a Chinese custom, and yet in this singular national fête, we find dancing is performed—formerly by the *literati*, now by the professional men. The dancers sing while dancing a monotonous, though melodious, song praising the virtues of the Great Sage.¹

The basis of the Chinese law is morals, hence it is no surprise to find that the magistrate, besides punishing those who violate the law, is also, theoretically at least, to reward those who have merit. An ultra-filial son or daughter, a faithful widow who lost her husband only after a few years' marriage, a townsman or a villager whose honesty and righteousness have stopped strifes and settled

¹ The ceremony of paying honour to Confucius has lately been revived in Tokyo. See Reinsch, *Intellectual and Political Currents in the Far East*, p. 288. After the Revolution, the fête, it seems, will be abandoned for ever.

quarrels, all deserve his especial attention. With the increase of duties in the magistracy, however, it is but natural that this part of the work—the reward of those with distinction—has gradually been lost sight of by him. When sutteeism¹ was still sanctioned by public opinion and was honoured by the central government, the magistrate was to report all the cases; the faithful widow who refrained from second marriage is similarly distinguished.

Having had a cursory account of the functions of our magistrate, we proceed to examine more closely why a Chinese district generally as large as an English county, and sometimes larger, can be adequately, if not efficiently, ruled by the sole government official. With neither a committee nor a council, is such an administration possible? If so, is it because social evolution among the Chinese, as with any other “lower” species of mankind, is ending in a blind alley, and they are becoming, to quote the words of a five weeks’ traveller in China, “a race of ants or bees of gregarious habits, but incapable of the organization of the ant-hill or the hive”?² To the full answer to this we shall devote the next two chapters. Before proceeding, however, we may dwell on some petty officials and also the system of Pochia.

A district is usually, if not always, provided with deputy-magistrates and secretaries. They both assist the magistrate in his work, but the latter

¹ Johnston, *op. cit.*

² *The Crusade*, March, 1912, p. 54.

concern themselves mostly in the preparation of reports. In case of pressure, or when particular circumstances demand it, *ad hoc* officials are appointed from the provincial government—that is, from the viceroy. These officials may or may not work conjointly with the magistrate, and it is here that anomalies occasionally arise. Good work done by the *ad hoc* officials often serves as a “push” for their further promotion.

The tao-tai, the prefect, the magistrate, and the other officials are chosen from the candidates either in the central government or in the provincial district. These candidates are, of course, examined, and have distinguished themselves long before they are appointed to occupy any office. With us, therefore, the second candidature is more difficult.

The *Pochia* system, the self-government of old China, had a remote origin. It was Wang An-Shih,¹ the great social reformer in the eleventh century, who first instituted the whole system in an efficient form, but it has been enforced now and then up to very recent times. So far as we know, the *Pochia* system actually existed in Tien-tsin till 1898, when the formal investigation was started; the sticking of the *pochia* placard on the doors is still vivid in our mind. It is more than probable that in the inland provinces, the system has still survived, though its actual function has been lost and replaced by other kinds of social organization.

¹ See Reinsch, *Intellectual and Political Currents in the Far East*, p. 128; Simcox, *Primitive Civilizations*, vol. ii.

The system is simple enough : one *chia* consists of a hundred families, each ten of which is called a *pai*. Each *pai* has its head man, elected by the ten families, and each *chia*, the larger unit, has also its head, called *pochia* (literally the protector of *chia*), and popularly known as *tipao*. The *pochia* attends the magistrates' *yamên* for a certain number of times every month, and it is his business to report to the magistrate all incidents of any importance. The principle of responsibility runs through the social structure of China, and more particularly in political organization. As the viceroy is responsible for his whole province, and the magistrate for his district—and, according to traditional theory, the Emperor for his subjects—so the *pochia* is burdened with the responsibility of the hundred families under his care. The explanation of this principle seems to us ingenious, for each authority is responsible towards his superiors, and the Emperor, above whom there exists no higher authority, is responsible to an impersonal Heaven !

Now under the *pochia* system every family is registered, and the placard, bearing the particulars of the whole family, is hung or stuck on the doors of the household. The placard contains the following details :

1. Number of *chia*.
2. Number of *pai*.
3. Number of the house.
4. Name of the head of the family, age, native

place (that is, town of nativity of the family), time of removal (if the removal be recent), profession. (If he is a tenant he has to state his rent ; if he owns land, the amount of tax is stated.)

5. The quality of the house—number of rooms owned, leased, or rented.
6. Members of the family—grandfather and grandmother, uncle and aunt, brothers and sisters, wife, sons and daughters, nephews and nieces, grandsons and granddaughters.
7. Lodgers and boarders (if there are any).

Even the monasteries and convents, hotels and lodging-houses, are not exempted from registration.

This system, cumbrous and artificial as it appears, has had also its glorious days. It is said that offenders against the law were once easily found out and identified ; when released they were easily put under strict vigilance of the families in his *chia*, especially the *pochia* ; social solidarity with regard to the responsibility for the offence was strengthened. Thus Wang Yang-Ming,¹ the philosopher of modern rationalism, introduced the system of allowing the defaulter bail if he was put under the care of the *pai*. A “ reform list ” (not black list) was provided to register the names of the defaulters ; the names were cancelled when the criminals were actually reformed with the assurance of all the families in the *pai*.

¹ See Reinsch, *op. cit.*, pp. 132-9.

The excessive burden and the incessant trouble which were placed on the shoulders of the *pochia* must have hastened the failure of the well-meant system. The head of the *pai* as well as the *pochia*, as we have shown, were elected, and few, as we might conjecture, except the well-to-do, could afford time for the stupendous public work. Yet among the well-to-do it is more commonly found that self-culture stands above everything. We need not trace out here how the *pochia* system has gradually become merely formal, how the *tipao*, as he is popularly called, has become a governmental office, filled only by men of lower classes.¹ Other factors, it may be mentioned, might have also hindered the good working of this systematic organization, such as lack of identity of interest, the division being merely territorial and artificial.

We have thus before us an outline of the general administration of a Chinese town, though the description does not in the least pretend to be exhaustive or complete. We would lay especial stress on the point, which is generally hidden from the sight of the students of the Chinese government, that the Chinese government is of the people, for the people, but not always by the people. The Emperor is responsible for the people, so also are the countless officials under him; the function of

¹ It is grossly unfair to say that all *tipao* are men of low class and doubtful character.

the former is to look after the people, so also is the function of the latter. Never, perhaps, have we found the Platonic theory of the State so faithfully carried out as in China: the so-called mandarins stand for the guardians, while the *literati*, the peasants, the artisans, and the traders each attend to their own business; yet social stratification is never markedly shown among different classes of people. The mandarin, it is true, is not always the ideal "superior man," nevertheless, he is the man who chiefly answers for social stability as well as social improvement in many districts. Numberless new duties begin to press, and the necessity of creating new authorities has long been felt. The magistrate, however, has never shown any reluctance to burden himself with new duties, so far as he is capable, as was shown, to take one instance, by his strict vigilance and indefatigable attention in suppressing the planting of poppies.

Now in this democratic twentieth century it would be ludicrous to enlarge in any eulogy of the system of a national government. What has been described will, we hope, throw some light on the archaic system, and show also its utility and merit in sustaining the welfare of all the population in China proper. It is now time for us to study the various kinds of social organization which have directly or indirectly assisted the magistrate in his administration of a district.

CHAPTER II

SOCIAL ORGANIZATIONS

It has been pointed out in the last chapter that the Chinese administration assumes an hierarchical structure, and that under the supreme head everybody becomes equal. This spirit is perhaps more distinctly shown in our family system. The family we may take as the most important kind of social organization: the family life becomes the basis of our social life. In another respect it forms the smallest unit in the Chinese community, and it is indeed no exaggeration to say that China, as a whole, consists of no individuals, but of families. Our ancients have laid especial stress on the regulation of the family. Thus the *Book of Rites* says:

“ . . . Verily, a wise man who governs the world with his face to the south, takes the part in which mankind have to walk (*i.e.*, the regulation of the family) as his starting point.”¹

“ Family ” in China has a much wider meaning than is understood in the West. A family usually includes, besides the husband, the wife, and the

¹ See *Liki*, Legge's translation.

children, the parents, brothers and sisters of the husband. In fact, all the brothers and the sisters of the same parents live together; nay, more, even their cousins and the wives of the brothers, when they are married, also live under one roof. The marriageable age in China ranges from 17 to 25. Matrimony is always contracted by the parents, and, as a rule, the son is married before he is capable of making a living by himself. The parents have not only the right, but the duty, of supporting the younger generation and seeing them properly matched. It is in this way that the family multiplies itself into a surprisingly great number of members. Thus it is far from uncommon to find in big families four or five generations in the same line, and if we count different lineages, ten to fifteen generations.

The Chinese family system is an institution that grows in the bosom of Time and continues to survive for centuries. It can hardly be introduced to an alien land, nor is it desirable for it to be suppressed in a few years' time, even if it proves unsatisfactory. Foreigners often wonder how Chinese family life is at all possible with such an aggregate of heterogeneous members living together. It is indeed strange, especially in the eyes of those saturated with the ideas of individualism. To understand it thoroughly, let us digress from our subject for a while and study the very spirit which pervades it. That spirit, for lack of a better term,

we shall call altruism. Altruism, in our present case, means forgetfulness of oneself, rather than “to do to others what we would like to be done to us.” It means a negation of self, rather than the sentimental desire to be liked by others. In one word, the Chinese conception of altruism is directly opposite to the teaching of Max Stirner: the exaltation of the Unique One (*der Einzige*). Loyalty to the Emperor, filial piety to parents, love for children would mean nothing if not the expressions of such a spirit. A Chinese does not live for himself and for himself alone. He is the son of his parents, the descendant of his ancestors, the potential father of his children, and the pillar of the family. His efforts towards literary distinction or official promotion are not directed merely for personal ends or personal reputation. Our ephemeral self is nothing; it is for the good of our ancestors, our immediate parents, and our descendants that we work, we drudge, and even we die. Suicide,¹ for instance, for the honour of the family, for the love of the husband, is practically tolerated. If the law did not definitely prohibit persons from committing suicide, would we not rather consider it the greatest liberty that they can have? However far as some may think the altruistic spirit may be from the realization of an individual self, it

¹ Durkheim calls this kind of suicide “altruistic suicide.” While admitting that it is the result of intense altruism, the writer of *Le Suicide* thinks that it only exists, with one exception, amongst the people of primitive culture. See especially the chapter on “Le Suicide Altruiste.”

certainly supports the integral structure of our society. Our wives, if they are looked upon as mean and servile, are perhaps more devoted to their husbands and children, whereas the husbands would be no less devoted to them. Why are there so many good, cheerful and contented fathers and sons in China, who, illiterate, ignorant, superstitious, and whatever they may be, do not require a sermon on every Sabbath day to derive some moral force? Is not there some spirit that we hardly comprehend unless we study closely the life of the people without any prejudice? "To be good for good's sake" has been too lofty a principle for men to act upon, and the Chinese are no exception. Here comes in the Chinese altruism. Doubts may be entertained, in spite of all that I have said, whether self-interest and egoism play any less important a rôle in Chinese life than elsewhere, and whether the so-called altruism is ever extended beyond kith and kin. Let us, in answer to the first objection, remind our readers that human nature as yet is far from being perfect, and that the personal element in whatever kind of system we may prescribe must be taken into account. The second objection we shall answer as we go along.

To return to our subject. The Chinese family forms at once the social and the political unit. Thus Mr. Johnston has well compressed the whole truth in one sentence :

"Nothing is more important for an under-

standing of the wonderfully stable and long-lived social system of China than this fact : that the social and the political unit are one and the same and that this unit is not the individual, but the family."¹

We need not dwell here on how the different members of the family live together, for they live only as their ancestors and their more remote ancestors had lived. This will, however, become apparent when we come to treat ancestor-worship. The proverb says : There are laws in every nation, so there are also laws in each family. Every family, it is true, has its own conventional rules, written or unwritten. "Yen's Family Laws,"² for instance, which are as remote as the Christian Era, form only one of the kind, while scores of other family laws have appeared within the last three hundred years. The code treats of relationships amongst the different members of the same family, etiquettes to be observed in worship, in funerals, in marriages, and in births, household economy, education of the children, etc. It is hardly necessary to exhaust every detail ; suffice it to say that an individual, male or female, in the common walks of life, will find therein all the necessary rules that he or she may require. That the code was never stereotyped into an unchangeable form we may

¹ Johnston, *op. cit.*, p. 135 ; see also chapter on family system, pp. 135-54.

² It may be pointed out that this is by no means the first of its kind, for the origin may be found in the *Three Books of Rites*.

easily realize by comparing the differences of those laws.

Thus, being a political unit, the family has its own legislation, which is, of course, compatible with and supplementary to the national conventions. It is, therefore, not surprising to find that the family has also its judiciary—that is, it may punish members who commit some petty offence. The disputes between two persons may be settled by the paterfamilias of the two families instead of going to the police court, for there was no police, or to the magistrate, for he is only the last resort to appeal to. The wrongdoer's family will either pay compensation or offer apologies, as custom demands, and the wrongdoer will be dealt with either by the parents or the elder members of the family. Disputes arising within a family are matters of utmost delicacy. The magistrate would frown over such cases if they are brought before him, as is well illustrated by our common saying : “ Even a clever magistrate can hardly arbitrate family matters.” At any rate, in spite of the reported despotic rule, official pressure, and extortion, the Chinese people, it must be observed, enjoy an anarchistic, or, rather, *laissez faire* regime. How little is the governmental action felt by the great majority of the Chinese. Indeed, how little does the government really try to interfere! Numberless quarrels are settled by private arbitration, without the least effort of the authorities. As

the strict vigilance of the police is lacking, the magistrate never knows—in fact, he never tries to know—these disputes. The paterfamilias of each disputant and elders with a good reputation would volunteer to perform arbitration in any instance.

On its social side, the family has many functions. The aged are invariably looked after in the family with care and intense piety, as the young are responsible for the welfare of their elders. On the other hand, the upbringing of the young remains for the parents, who, apart from parental love, would educate them as an investment. Since the son, after his marriage, continues to live with his father, he often, if not always, provides the latter with livelihood and comfort. The State may dispense with old age pensions, as they are paid by the filial sons and even daughters. Poor relief has for us not yet become a serious problem, for the poor are generally a charge on the family or the relatives. Although the lot of a Chinese, whether a parent or a son, seems so surprisingly hard, and the rising generation, imbued with the so-called advanced ideas, resents the old idea of supporting the whole family, it may be said that the old system—that is, family socialism—is, on the whole, socially desirable. Under such a system the whole population may be equally poor, but they are, I conceive it, better than the community in which many are deprived even of bare subsistence, while others enjoy a fortune of millions. The Chinese

who possess the greatest wealth are not to be found in China, but in the British, Dutch, and French colonies, and also on the continent of America, where family relations are more or less severed.¹

Such is the indispensable rôle that the Chinese family plays. In a society where no highly developed industry exists, where all men are attached to the land, where persons of common descent are closely united, and where morals, or, rather, conventions, are above law, the family, however simple the organization may be, has, it must be admitted, fulfilled its purpose well. Even the nation, as I have remarked, is no more than an aggregate of families: that is, every organism, whether it be a province, or a prefecture, a district, or a village, becomes a small or big family. It lies far out of our domain to predict whether the family, as a kind of social organization, will in the future render as useful a service as it has done for centuries, but leaving this question aside, we may inquire into the religious aspect of the family system.

What cements together the members of the family? What is their common object in view? Undoubtedly it is the ancestor worship, which is often mistaken, as by Spencer and Grant Allen, for the origin of religion. The influence and the potential force of this much-ridiculed cult are often ignored even by the Chinese themselves. It is "a

¹ I may be accused of making too sweeping a generalization. Of course, in these places there are far more opportunities of enterprise.

cult which has done so much in the past to preserve, consolidate, and multiply the Chinese people and make them peaceful, law-abiding, and home-loving, and which has nevertheless been condemned as idolatrous by the two great branches of the Christian faith. It was this rock of Chinese orthodoxy that shattered the power of the Church of Rome in China, and that rock is still a danger and an obstruction in the troubled waters through which glide the frail barques of the Christian missions.”¹ Every big family has its own stories of ancestry, illustrious ancestors who did such and such things for the people when they were governors or administrators, those who did philanthropic work, those who distinguished themselves in literary or artistic work, and so forth. Even in the humble families, the old people are never tired of narrating how their ancestors led a strenuous life, and how certain members in a later generation failed through bad behaviour. Such are the sources by which the young Chinese are inspired and from which they derive their aspirations. If the Chinese mothers, lacking education as they do, could not hold up to their sons and daughters celebrated historical figures as their ideals, these poor examples of ancestors would, nevertheless, serve the purpose—to make them conscious of their responsibility. Every Chinese loves to trace the long history of his own family, originating centuries ago and destined to

¹ Johnston, *From Peking to Mandalay*, pp. 80-81.

an indefinite future. Confucius says : “ Attend to the coming (generation) and remember the remote (ancestors).” One can hardly find a better expression to interpret the Chinese mind. Ancestor-worship is therefore far from being an idolatrous worship, a worship of ghosts and goblins ; it is a respect to the past, gratitude to what the past has handed down to us, admiration to the good example of the past. Since relationships and ancestral heroes count so much, it is but natural that ancestor-worship has become paramount in importance and great in potential force. The altruism by which a man would share his last penny with his family—which includes also his brother’s wife, aunt on the father’s side, etc.—shows how much stress the Chinese lay on common descent.

It may be pointed out here that hero-worship is prevalent in China. The deification of local worthies and the deification of the eminent orthodox scholars in the Confucian Pantheon can but explain how far such worship differs from idolatry.

Thus far, we have dealt only with organization on the basis of blood relationship. Let us now take leave of the family and proceed to examine organizations formed on the line of professions. The *literati* have their seminaries and clubs, and the merchants and artisans their guilds. The seminaries are semi-official in character, for, though started and maintained by the *literati* themselves, they are usually under the patronage of the State officials.

Examinations—in most cases the examination takes the form of essay writing on any subject under the sun, but usually on classical subjects, and the writers are freely allowed to consult books—are held in the seminary once, twice, or thrice a month, as the case may be. Prizes are awarded—the good writers even depend purely on the lucrative income in the form of prizes for their living—and the competitors are told what to read and how to make improvements in their study. An erudite scholar of repute either elected by the *literati* or nominated by the magistrate presides over the seminary. Apart from the examinations he occasionally holds, he meets the students now and then and gives them advice with regard to their work. He is undoubtedly a figure of great influence, for it is his learning, energy, and outlook that will influence the rising *literati*. In the days when such seminaries were flourishing—it was only ten or twenty years ago—the disciples of different presidents often vied with one another in representing different schools of classical study and literary style, but rarely of thought.

The maintenance of the seminary, as has been pointed out, is subsidized by the district revenue. It is therefore a municipal undertaking, and the magistrate merely plays the combined part of nominal patron and treasurer—the endowed sum is not made up by special taxes but is taken from the existing revenue. The number of seminaries is

thus determined by the amount of revenue collected in the district, and, of course, also by the enlightened condition of the people. In the districts where more money can be disposed of for education, the seminaries are usually numbered in tens, and they would then differ in character; those which are exclusively founded for the students who have not yet passed any governmental examination, those for the first degree men, and those for the second degree men. The seminary may possess property of its own in the form of land, the rent derived from which meets current expenses. Certain seminaries possess rich collections of books, and publish treatises. But the greatest collections of books are found, apart from the library of the Hanlin Academy at Peking, mostly in certain big families, rather than in the seminaries.¹

The literary and poetical clubs are voluntary organizations among the *literati* class. Some may have only an ephemeral existence, while others retain a long and fruitful life, for there are beautiful essays and readable poems that are produced from these clubs. The meeting is informal, with hardly any regulations. It is, in short, a social gathering,

¹ It may be pointed out here that under the old system, an imperial examiner is appointed for each province every three years by the central government. Under him, the education is fostered and modified; the seminary is sometimes reorganized. The examiners are all scholars of great reputation, graduates from the Hanlin Academy; and their influence on education is far from a negligible quantity. We need not enumerate here the subordinate officials of the imperial examiner, and the local authorities on education.

where friends meet to discuss literary topics, to compose poems or poetical dramas, to draw pictures, or to engrave stamps. These informal gatherings are never, so far as we know, penetrated by foreigners who know neither our language nor our literature. It is no wonder that our *literati* are always so miserably depicted by foreigners. We can scarcely refrain from shedding tears for our poor *literati*, while reading one after another the comments on them. Nothing is further from the truth than to stigmatize them with "ignorance, bigotry, violence, and corruption." That they are humane is only a truism, and their versatility and many-sided interests invite our admiration. Artistic writing, drawing, and engraving are the most common recreations for the *literati*; even ink-making and pen-brush making may also constitute a part of the amusement. These informal gatherings, where work and recreations are combined, are, alas! disappearing, or have already totally disappeared, in this workaday world.

The guilds are of three kinds : those of co-provincials, those of merchants, and those of artisans.¹ The guild, a very wide subject by itself owing to its great variety, will be treated here only on its general outline. The guild of the co-provincials is entirely social in character; it is formed, as the

¹ Readers who are interested in this fascinating subject may read H. B. Morse, *The Guilds of China*, a careful though by no means complete study. The comparison between English and Chinese guilds is excellent.

name indicates, by the people of the same province, when they reside in a province other than their own. There is no social distinction in membership. The honorary president is elected by and from the committee; the latter really control everything. His term lasts one month or one year, as the case may be. The membership subscription is not uniform; those who cannot afford to pay are not disqualified from their membership, while those who pay most enjoy no special privileges. The gild does splendid work towards their co-provincials: to assist the destitute, to relieve the orphans and widows, to send back to the province the corpse of the dead, to defray the burial expenses, etc. The grand meeting is held once or more than once annually, when there will be a feast and entertainments.

The local merchants' gild is organized by the merchants of the same trade. The bankers, for instance, have their own gild, where, disregarding the provincial barriers, all the bankers of the town are admitted by paying a certain sum or fee. They meet now and then to determine the market; they arbitrate disputes arising between the members. The other traders have also their own gilds, such as that of the salt trade, which is owned by the government as a monopoly by giving licences to a fixed number of manufacturers, rice trade, flour trade, tea trade, etc. It is the collectivity and solidarity of these trade gilds that answer for the

stability of the Chinese market and hence for social peace. European writers may denounce these guilds as a mediæval institution, but judging by the good of the community, they are by no means antiquated or corruptive in function. The morals of the trade are strictly observed; members violating the regulations are expelled from the guild. As the Chinese merchants are middlemen pure and simple, their profit is generally very limited, unlike that of capitalists who possess both the machine of production and of exchange. Is it not a social good to check, as do our trade guilds, the immoral competition which would in the long run ruin the people and also the competitors?

The artisans' guild may be said to be still enshrouded in obscurity, for no one, so far as we know, has ever written thoroughly on this important form of organization which has insured and will continue to insure the welfare of the labourers. As is well known, the Chinese are mostly small farmers, and the manual workers, who are severed entirely from land, are but a drop in the ocean. Their number, however, with the growth of coast towns, the scarcity of land, the growth of easy communication, and other numberless social changes, is rapidly increasing. As the artisans generally lead a life from hand to mouth, with hardly enough money to spare, they cannot afford to secure a big imposing building for their club-house as the merchants have. Hence in ordinary times no form of

gild is discernible; the workers, both masters and apprentices, form a multitude of small groups, each in their own locality. They meet very seldom, except once or twice in the new year season, when they feast together and enjoy entertainments. Temples or the halls of the fire brigade station are used as the meeting-place. The master and the apprentice are equally admitted to the gild, but whether the independent casual workers, who do not belong to the small group, are admitted is not known to us. The presidency of the artisans' gild falls upon the master who is supposed to be the most aged in the trade.

The wages of the apprentice are generally half those of the master. The fee for apprenticeship differs in different trades, and in certain trades it is entirely wanting. To an almost incredible degree is mutual assistance maintained as between master and apprentices or former apprentices who have already become masters. As it is well known that the Chinese respect and love their teachers almost as parents, so the apprentices, with no less reverence and affection, regard their masters, from whom they learn the trade. Within the small group of workmen a patriarchy is formed. The master in his old age may, if he is in need, depend upon those who have been his apprentices; on the other hand, the latter are protected by the former in a paternal way.

One word about religion. The Chinese gilds,

like mediæval English gilds, are commonly related to religious worship. The ordinary gild worships “ God ” in its very vague sense ; the worship takes place at the new year. A great variety of offerings is placed on the table, with neither idol nor image to enjoy them. This is, in fact, a very simple ceremony, and in the end worshippers are privileged to share offerings. Theatrical entertainments are arranged not only for the amusement of the members during the time of meeting, but also “ in respect of God.” God is also worshipped in the merchants’ gild, but there is another divine being, more influential and more vital, worshipped by the merchants’ gild and also in the shops and stores. At this point, at any rate, the Chinese must be considered as consistent, honest, and full of common sense, for the divine being is no other than the Mammon himself—the God of Riches. Judging from the trade regulations, the character of the merchants, and also their transactions, however, Mammon worship, it must be asserted, is never carried too far beyond the limit.

To inquire into the petty gods worshipped by the artisans in their gilds shows how the Chinese worship talent. For, although the names of these gods are generally fictitious and groundless, they are—or are supposed to be—either divine patrons or the first men who began the different trades. Most of the names are taken from the Classics, in which but a slight mention of the name connects it

with the trade. For instance, the god the carpenter worships is called Kungsuntze, whose artfulness was mentioned once and once only by Mencius. Some patron gods are genuine historical figures. Each divine being has his own birthday, and on that day all the artisans engaged in the same trade celebrate a holiday.

Readers may realize by now how little have the people to do with the government officials, except for judicial purposes, and how vital are the private organizations for our social life. Besides the family and the gild, which have been but roughly dealt with in the last few pages, scores of other functions are undertaken by the people themselves. They are, for instance, their own police, their own fire brigade, and their own relieving officers. We may mention here first of all the public fire brigade, which is organized entirely by the people. Pumps are bought from the subscribed funds, but no permanent staff of firemen is kept. At the signal of fire—it will be given from one station to the other at a very fast rate—most of the men near the station turn out and run with the antiquated pumps to the fire; the workmen leave their work, and the small traders even their stalls. They are only volunteers; they are not paid, not even one penny. The only benefit they can get is in the form of cakes, presented to them by the relieved as a token of gratitude. Watching the hustling crowd of the firemen whose courage and devotedness are neither

prompted by self-interest nor by personal esteem, but by an altruism, pure and simple, one can but wonder how under certain circumstances people can help themselves without the least interference from the State or any authority. In each year are held two festivals, when feasts and theatrical entertainments are given to the firemen and also to the subscribers; these festivals are observed, it may be pointed out, in honour of the God of Fire. The subscription is, like every other kind of subscription that is known in China, never uniform.

Organizations with the object of social relief are not lacking in China. Nothing is more erroneous than to think that the family system, the patriarchy, and the social solidarity would leave no social problems. Indeed, there are problems which are inherent in and peculiar to our own system. With us social relief is, of course, on a much smaller scale; it is in the hands of the people, and the only official interference is the endowment with a certain sum of money from the local revenue. There are the orphanage, the widows' house, the soup-kitchen, the vaccination hospital, and the life-saving stations. The disposal of the dead is looked upon by the Chinese as most important. It is but natural that we have institutions to endow coffins, and to subsidize burial expenses. Lots of land are provided for burying unknown strangers who are found dead.

A remarkable feature which is perhaps inherent

in the Chinese family system is the private charity given by certain big families. Thus in the town the rich distribute clothes, flour and rice, medicine, and coffins among those who present letters or notes from respectable persons. The abuse is in this way checked. In a society which bears not the least resemblance to a modern industrial society in point of complexity the word of a respectable person is sufficient, and no further cross-examination is needed.

Since the burial of the dead is extended to strangers in the form of charity, it is natural that much more importance is attached to the burial of one's own parents. Certain organizations consisting of middle class people exist with the view of saving money for future burial expenses. Mutual aid plays in them an important rôle. The "Old Men's Society," for instance, is one of the kind, and the method of organization may be briefly stated thus :

The arrangement and the work are usually entrusted to a bank. Members are enrolled and the total amount is then fixed, to be paid within a limited time in monthly instalments. The total amount may be drawn after the enrolment at any time when the burial of a parent takes place. In this case the subscriber will have to pay up the instalments till the total amount is reached. For those who have never touched the sum within the limited period, interest on the savings is given.

The annual meeting is held in new year's time, when, as at nearly every meeting in China, a great feast is given. The organization is ephemeral; for when the term of years expires the society breaks up. It is voluntary and private; for it is limited to a small number of men, at most a hundred, and it, like the guilds, has never spread far and wide forming a great national institution. Yet, a timely service it has certainly rendered, and a free combination, which is merely social in character, seems more advantageous than the organizations carried on on business lines.

The secret societies which are said to be abundant in China are doubtless much exaggerated. We are not concerned here to unearth their organizations. Ephemeral societies, like mushrooms, may spring up anywhere and at any time, for instance, in the building of a new temple, but they come, as they disappear, very rapidly, without making any ripple in the still waters of society. Thus well-to-do people may start a subscription with the view of building a certain temple of whatever kind, unless the community raises any objection. Other men may come to help the same cause. When the work is completed, nothing but the temple with the monks remains. Yet the utility of these temples, which are found everywhere in China, is manifold, as the site of festivals, the warehouse of goods, the class-room of private tutors, the meeting-place of poor artisans, the dining-room of feasting

parties, etc. Societies temporarily found with the object of arranging festivals, processions, and celebrations are numerous; with these we need not deal.

The temperance society, which bears a quasi-religious character and is widely known as the Tsaili Sect, prompts our attention. Its distribution is indeed wide, and its work, so far as we are able to gather, is more than satisfactory. It is supposed to be a Taoist organization, although it has nothing to do with Laotze, just as the friendly societies are unconnected with Christ. The members, drawn from every class of society, abstain from both drinking and smoking. But they generally use a kind of specially made medicinal snuff, which differs radically from the ordinary snuff made of tobacco. The minimum membership fee is about sixpence a year, but the great part of the expenses is contributed by wealthy members of the society. The head or president of the society resides on the premises. He must be a vegetarian, a widower, or a man who has cut off all the family relations. In this respect and in the respect of worship which is performed to a Taoist founder, the sect may perhaps be considered as a Taoist offshoot. The interesting ceremony of becoming a member conducted by the aged head symbolizes the rebirth of a man. After the ceremony is over, a grand feast is served in the club-house, where all fellow-members are present to receive the newly-made

members. A shibboleth not to be communicated to anybody who does not belong to the society is taught to the new members, and it is said that this secret cant has efficacy in checking the members from drinking or smoking, even if they are sorely tempted. Yet nothing is further from the truth, for, after close investigation, it is found to consist only of very simple and meaningless words, which we need not reproduce here. The membership is entirely personal, as no other member of the family is involved, and the cancellation of membership can be made any time.

The "sworn brothers" is a remarkable organization that is peculiar to China. Friends, however intimate and however sincere, are, in the minds of the Chinese, one step further apart than brothers, for we hold, theoretically at any rate, that brothers are the "hands and feet of one body," that is, members of the same body. But to go through a certain ceremony together establishes a brotherhood between friends. The ceremony is simplicity itself: the usual worship of Heaven and the ancestors. Documents containing the names of the persons concerned, the names of their ancestors up to the fourth generation and the statement, that the persons have become sworn brothers, are interchanged among the members. The number of members is limited at most to four, the relation is entirely personal, none of the other members of the family being concerned. This kind of organ-

ization, it is scarcely necessary to add, has its excellent as well as its corrupt aspects ; it is now in its decline.

From this short review of our social institutions, we see that, besides the family, numerous organizations exist and assume various kinds of activities. Lacking in communication as China is, local ties are strong. No wonder that organizations are mostly local in interest, free in constitution, and ephemeral in existence. Thanks to our family system, which is the basis of our social life, and to our agriculture, or national industry, we have small communities, more or less self-contained, self-governing, and self-protecting. The study of Chinese organizations is indeed a rich mine which awaits opening, but we are not able to deal with them further here. Let us now turn to examine the life of the townspeople, as it appears to a spectator.

CHAPTER III

THE TOWN LIFE

FROM a Westerner's point of view, town life in China is an uneventful one. For there are, as a rule, no attractions and but few kinds of amusements, and the amusements are generally reserved for certain times of the year. At times, it is true, plague, floods, and the failure of harvest may bring to the people most disastrous consequences. But these misfortunes are, after all, the exception, and we may take the town in its normal state and describe in the present chapter the peaceful life of its people.

Let us trace, first of all, the life of an individual from his or her birth. Childbirth in China stands as a great occasion, not merely for the mother herself, but for the family and the relations as well. When the child is born, messages are delivered to all the close relatives, who will participate equally in the great joy of the mother. The child is then baptised in a quasi-religious manner—that is to say, the midwife, while baptising the child, chants some words, which are supposed to bring luck: for instance, “Long live the child!” “May the

great learning, riches, and reputation be with thee ! ” or if it be a girl, “ Mayst thou lead a happy life and secure a good husband ! ” “ Be skilful in needlework ! ” etc. Generally speaking, the girl is less appreciated than the boy, but certain writers have gone too far in asserting that the girl is always received by the members of the family with sullenness instead of rejoicing. This is, of course, a gross exaggeration. The girl is treated in the same way as the boy. In a society where woman is invariably domesticated, one can hardly expect to find the feeling that a girl could ever take the place of a boy ; nor indeed can one find such a feeling in any other society. With regard to infanticide we have read descriptions of every kind. It is but necessary to say that the keen struggle for existence might perhaps destroy the feeling of parents. For, how else can we interpret the mind of such parents, who are, after all, human, if they are not “ the victims of social forces, like the thousands of civilized working mothers who are forced to neglect their babies to-day ? ”¹ One must not assume, however, that such a custom is prevalent ; flagrant and sometimes dramatic accounts, of which we have heard so much, only hold true in certain districts and at times of famine. It is also not uncommon that foreigners take the fact of infant mortality as evidence of infanticide !

As soon as the child is born presents of various

¹ See Zimmern, *The Greek Commonwealth*, p. 325.

descriptions flow in from close relations. Unless the family is too poor, the child is generally not without toys, and, when grown bigger, candies and even pocket-money. Only the well-to-do employ nurses to look after the child, and the great majority of the people entrust it to the mother alone. The garden, sometimes the courtyard, if there grow few flowers, forms the playground, but the poor child is content with streets, squares, or temples. The substitute for parks and open grounds is only to be found in the cornfields and orchards of the neighbourhood. The poor children usually gather around the door-steps of a house and there play innocent if sometimes quarrelsome games; in default of pavements, queer figures in chalk often appear on brick walls. They play the whole day long in peace, being neither disturbed by motor-cars nor by policemen. Instead of kindergarten toys, the Chinese children possess kites of very ingenious make, diaboloes, balls, and tangrams (a set of seven wooden pieces of different shape, with which the child is told to make different shapes representing different things). They have their own melodious nursery rhymes¹ sung to them day and night while they are crying.

At the age of about seven the girl is submitted to the degenerate custom of foot-binding. From about twelve she will no longer mingle freely with

¹ The translation of these rhymes has been published in America, under the title of *Chinese Mother Goose Rhymes*.

strange boys. In rare cases only we find the girl, when she is most treasured by her parents, dressed exactly like a boy, and experiencing none of the pain of her unfortunate sisters. The practice of foot-binding is never strictly observed among the poorer classes, especially in Southern China. Thus leisure and wealth, though often a means of culture, are more often associated with vice.

It is a gross misconception that the girl is never educated, though it may be true of the poorer classes. She is sometimes taught with the boy under the same teacher, as every family employs its own tutor for the elementary education of the young. She is taught to read and to write. The *Girls' Four Books*, which is as old as the Christian era, is only one of the text-books designed entirely for the use of girls. She learns from her parents or brothers to read poetry and fiction—a certain amount of the latter now current, only appeals to the feminine readers. The girl leaves the school at the age of fifteen, whether she wills it or not; for her sphere of action, at least as most people rightly or wrongly suppose, lies in the domestic circle. As the domestic work in the East has been far more difficult than the Westerner of to-day can possibly imagine, her education, lacking encouragement and leisure as it does, purely depends upon her own taste and inclination. It is also interesting to notice that the Chinese mother, with few exceptions, desires her daughter to become a skilful needle-

woman or competent housekeeper ; her education, the mother conceives, may be an accomplishment, but will not help her in life.

The boy has a much harder time to look forward to. He goes to the school-room with the dawn, and comes out with the sunset. He is allowed one hour for the midday meal, but when, as in most cases, he is to dine with his tutor, he has less. He knows neither Sundays nor half-holidays. In spite of all this, which makes our school of the old type more like a reformatory or a prison, the boy does not read and read all the time. When he is told to do writing, for instance, more time is squandered than is necessary. Tricks, as we find them in the public school here, find also their counterparts there. Primers in rhymes are first put in the hands of the beginner ; he is taught to read and repeat, but only rarely, unless the tutor is an expert, is the book explained. The primers contain precepts of the sages, maxims for the young, and also prominent historical facts.

Then the boy proceeds to master the sayings of Confucius and Mencius, the Great Learning and the Doctrine of Mean ; these are better known as the Four Books. In the meantime, he may take up a classic. The discretion of the tutor has much to do with the boy's progress ; if he is an expert he will choose what is digestible and interesting to the young mind. As the local authorities play no part in education, except as an examining body of the

advanced students, the teacher is, in fact, under a *laissez faire* regime, not to be realized by their confrères in the West. There are no hard and fast rules, no curricula, except the traditional order of study; yet the competent teachers would not keep slavishly to this. State supervision of education does not exist, and recognized qualifications for a teacher are unknown. Nevertheless, the parents will instinctively, as it were, secure the right teacher for their children. We need not here follow the boy through his course or describe how he is taught to write prose and pen a verse, how he wades through the expanse of books, useful and useless, and how he appears as a candidate for the first degree examination. The old method of teaching is "individualistic," for the tutor teaches each student separately according to his own standard; only occasionally do we find two, or at most three, forming a class. Competition in the class disappears altogether; yet brilliant boys, unhampered by the slow ones so that improvements may be made by leaps and bounds, do turn up and distinguish themselves.

Let us not lose sight of the poor, who in China, as in any other country, form the majority of the whole population. The children of the poor are handicapped by the poverty and illiteracy of the parents—which do not necessarily mean ignorance. The ordinary child lives from his infancy in the atmosphere of education itself; he is taught to

know words at a very early age, he is taught to recognize words in the tablets, scrolls, and pictures which are hung in every room, and he is brought up among the cultivated. The poor have few of these advantages, but strange as it may be, their ardent desire to educate their young is never disheartened, if only their means can provide. Every Chinese parent cherishes only one high ideal for the young—to pass the highest official examinations and to become an official. Even if this fails, to belong to the *literati* class is no less desirable. As is widely known, our competitive examination is open to all kinds of people. Charity schools, established by the rich and sometimes by public funds, exist everywhere, but the poor are generally too proud to resort to them. Hence we find certain schools receiving students, whose fee is paid daily instead of monthly or annually; the teacher undertakes to give certain lessons for a period, after which the student with his very limited knowledge of reading will go to a profession. The Taoist or Buddhist temple is utilized as a school building; the teacher, precarious in his position and restricted in his means, can find no better place as cheap and as spacious.¹ Even in villages, when work on the soil is suspended in winter in the north, “winter three-months’ ” schools are to be found. The

¹ The new tendency since 1900 has been for all temples to be turned into schools or public premises by the local educational committee or by the local authority. Their intention, however admirable, has, unfortunately, led them to blind disregard of the interests affected.

“ winter-hearth ” tutor, as he is often jokingly and scornfully called because he is an unemployed in his class but only looks for any casual job in that season, teaches the sons of farmers the very rudimentary knowledge of writing and reading. However ridiculous and worthless his teaching may appear, the young and energetic village children really profit by it. Occasionally the bright ones, once their instinctive love of study is aroused, climb the ladder and become candidates for degree examination.

The routine work of a girl is needlework and cooking.¹ She is taught to spin, to knit, and to sew; she is expected to be skilful in making socks as well as a fur coat. As the tailoring trade still remains imperfectly developed, a middle-class girl has to equip herself with the art of sewing so as to be able to provide every kind of garment for herself and her husband. Embroidery, a work of competition, is a much-talked-of subject among the girls; when an artistic work is produced, it is appreciated by all with admiration and envy. Most complicated is the culinary art in China. The girl has therefore to acquaint herself with the art of cooking, and she must, at least, be able to prepare two or three ordinary dishes. Even baking must not

¹ Cf. the training of Greek women, Blümner's *Leben und Sitten der Griechen* (Eng. translation by Zimmern, pp. 129-30). Here the writer is wrong in saying that “ the semi-Oriental system of shutting off women from the outer world and degrading them into mere managers of the household, necessarily lowered the average culture of women.”

be overlooked, for the bakers as a rule only supply the lower classes. From childhood till maternity, the girl is not, as many might imagine from this account, a domestic slave. Both sewing and cooking come naturally to her; she is brought up in an *entourage* where neither lecture nor laboratory experiment is required.¹ In fact, she is her mother's helpmate, and in poorer classes she performs the function of a housewife. If her domestic work is lessened, she can devote more time to writing and reading; but among the idle rich she is probably no more wisely employed than we expect a wealthy girl to be.

The lot of a poor girl is invariably a wretched one; she leads an arduous and hard-working life from childhood. By the custom of most poor agricultural districts, a girl is often taken to her betrothed's home before marriage. Her mother puts off a responsibility, whereas her mother-in-law is only too willing to secure an additional hand. When her husband attains a certain age, formal marriage takes place and co-habitation is allowed. This helps us to understand how a custom grows out of economic necessity. In the town it is probably the poor girl who suffers most. She is deprived of many kinds of work which we find in

¹ It is interesting to note here that the girls of to-day (for instance, in the coast towns) are taught sewing and cooking in schools, but the result is not at all satisfactory. Of course, a great revolution of domestic life is shortly expected, when less cooking and little sewing will be required of a housewife, as we find to be the case in most Western countries to-day, especially in England.

the West. There have been no factories, no hospitals;¹ the button-holing trade has not yet been established! She gets odd jobs of sewing, rears silkworms (this only in some parts of the country), and spins where yarn is in demand. At any rate, her existence is a miserable one; unlike her brother, she can hardly emigrate singly. Had she not been protected by her parents or her family, who could predict what the result would be?

Enough has been said about the life of our poor sisters. It is now time to investigate the union of man and woman, our marriage system. Every betrothal is arranged by the parents of the parties, as it is supposed that the parents are responsible for the marriage of the young and that the young man or young woman often yields to blind passions and superficial sentiments, and lacks the experience of choosing a life-long partner. Here comes in the somewhat peculiar idea of the Chinese marriage. Besides being the satisfaction of the man and the woman concerned, it is also made for the sake of ancestors and of the family. Propagation of the family remains the chief object in view, whereas domestic work ~~is reserved for the wife~~. It is no anomaly, therefore, that the parents, with their

¹ So far as we know, the factories or workshops now take work-girls. To mention one instance, a match works in Tientsin employs a number of very young girls, whose pallid cheeks and languid looks are indeed beyond the power of our pen to describe. On this point one may well be left to his own imagination. What is more painful to think is that this is only one of the many direct results of the clamour for industrial development, and that more, far more, is to come, if timely precaution is not taken.

intense altruism, should meddle with the engagements of their sons and daughters. Negotiations may be made through a match-maker, who may be a man or a woman, and is generally a friend to both parties. The third alternative is to rely on a woman who makes match-making her profession—she belongs to the maidservant class, but is a widely popular figure among different classes.¹ Thanks to the common sense of the people, the professional match-makers are a negligible quantity in the match-making world. The betrothals made by the parents, it must be confessed, are not always satisfactory; nor do we assert that they are by any means intolerable, since the Chinese for generations have been born of such marriages.

Hence with us the archaic system which has survived for centuries and which is probably going to disappear is to marry first and to make love afterwards. When love fails, divorce is legally permissible, but—woe to the sufferers!—it is practically impossible in the upper and middle classes. Once born, everyone's fate in marriage life lies entirely in the hands of the parents, the "cardinal expression of freedom in the human life" is never dreamt of. Again, once engaged and married, each one becomes the life-long slave of the other; unless one party dies, re-marriage remains unrealizable. Yet re-marriage of a widow has always been denounced as low breeding and is subject to ridicule. Since

¹ Cf. "*προμνηστριά*" in ancient Greece.

marriage is in fact indissoluble and their fate is predestined, the couple has, I believe, "to try and make the best of things, and frequently they do in an astonishing measure succeed."¹ Friction and quarrel between couples doubtless do exist, as we know that perfect harmony under whatever conditions has ever been an unattainable ideal. Yet all things considered, the degree of happiness that often reigns in the family is surprising. It would be exaggerating to say that once married, love always follows, but the effort to compromise, the endeavour to make the union as happy as possible, and the common interest in pleasing their parents and tending the young, really yield a result that is probably beyond the apprehension of strangers. It is an excellent example of the Chinese altruism. The allegations of wife-beating, so far as we are able to glean, are sheer nonsense. To decide this we must inquire into the position of woman in China.

The "oriental view of woman" has now become a common though misleading phrase; it includes in fact as many views as there are races and religions. Now in China the woman is always considered as a complement to man. The two elements—male and female—constitute humanity, and hence the universe, for even in the spiritual and the physical world, if we believe our antiquated philosophers, the two elements always supplement each

¹ See Stephen Reynolds, *Seems So*, p. 248.

other, neither standing by itself. She has never, it is true, been exactly on the same footing with man. To quote one of our poems which shows how the inequality is conceived :

“A man may do this wrong, and time
Will fling its shadow o’er his crime.
A woman who has lost her name
Is doomed to everlasting shame.”¹

Chastity is a special virtue for women, but not for men, and this represents the prevalent idea not only of the Chinese but of diverse races of people. Since the family is the social and political unit, there is no necessity for recognizing a woman individually as a legal person. She is merged into that organism of the family as her husband is; she, no less than he, is to discharge her duties for the welfare of the family.

As a rule she is kept from men in a small circle of family members and relatives. On this point writers, neither ascertaining the facts nor reasoning out the truth, hastily conclude that the Chinese shut their women under lock and key and bind their feet. Some knowledge of Chinese classics will suffice to show that men and women have their own spheres of activity and that neither is to interfere with the other. “War, politics, and public speaking are the sphere of man; that of woman is to keep house, to stay at home and to receive her husband.” The Chinese ideal has been no

¹ Prof. Giles’s translation.

more and no less than this, except that war and public speaking are replaced by literary pursuits or farming. The ancients took the difference between the two sexes with solemnity, and more than once we find allusions have been made to promiscuity as beastliness. By degrees, perhaps, seclusion becomes a sign of propriety and a morbid Puritanic virtue outgrows the well-meant intentions of the ancients. Far from the brutal force of the man, it is the woman who observes the traditional custom to avoid the derision of the ignorant and remains a conventional slave. Yet in the official circles, and, of course, in the lower classes, this morbid virtue of seclusion is never so strictly observed as in the bourgeois life.

A Chinese woman may inherit her parents' property when there is no male heir or when she is really in need after her marriage. The dowry of the bride consists of furnitures of the bedroom, hangings and pictures of the drawing-room, and sometimes a part of her parents' property. The burthen of a father seems therefore so much greater when we realize the heavy expenditure for a daughter's marriage. In arranging a matrimonial contract, the mother has her say and must not be overlooked. No decision can be made without her expressed consent; in the case of disagreement it is the husband who has to yield. The mother has no less an authority than the father over the children with regard to their education. Generally

she performs the functions of the nurse, the governess, and the teacher of advanced sewing combined. A woman can never be insulted; she must be treated with courtesy, and whenever there is a dispute between a man and a woman, all spectators would at once side with the latter. Even in the slums amid dirt and squalor the woman may work like a slave, but she is never so treated by her husband.

Unlike the Greek married woman,¹ the Chinese girl, when married, belongs to two families, for she worships the ancestors of her husband as well as her own, and on the death of her own parents or her parents-in-law she wears (theoretically) the same mourning clothes for three years; just as the son-

¹ A most descriptive statement on the Greek woman by Wilamowitz-Moellendorf has been translated and quoted by Zimmern in *The Greek Commonwealth*, p. 329. It is both suggestive and illuminating, and for the sake of comparison it is reproduced here in full. "For a Greek maiden, her wedding-day was in truth the great festival of her life. She received a husband so early that all the feelings which to-day moves a girl at her Confirmation, because they are natural and justifiable, were united with those which accompany wedlock. The time of freedom and play is over. She brings her dove and her ball to Artemis, who has watched over her years of childhood. Before her lies a time of seriousness of work and self-denial. Forth she goes from her parents' house, a faithful servant with her for the sake of her inexperience; but all other ties are snapped. She will wind no more wreaths for the altars before the old house; she will carry no more offerings for her grandparents to the cemetery at new moon; she will dance no more with her playmates, or carry the basket of the goddess in the high festival procession; she will be under the sway of other house-gods, she will bear offerings to other graves; and to Artemis she will cry not in play but in bitter pain. She will sit upon the hearth-stone, as her good mother used to sit, turning the busy wheel, ordering the maids, working and directing, rising up in the evening, full of cheerfulness and willing service, to meet her returning husband, who is her master."

in-law is generally considered as "half-son" of his wife's father, because he sometimes discharges the duty of a son in the case of the latter's destitution or death. This explains why wife-beating sounds like a fabrication. Even if the duty of a son-in-law be entirely disregarded, his wife will have parents, members of the family, and, as a last resort, relatives, to fall back on when she is ill-treated. In spite of barbarous punishments, the Chinese, we must not forget, are human beings; an unhappy union, which is no fault of the partners, is invariably tolerated, so far as we know, with the utmost patience. Wife-beating seems utterly inconceivable as an admitted practice. If such a thing occurs in the lower classes (and I believe it to be but rare) it is only a sign of ill-breeding; it affords no example of the Chinese view of woman, still less does it suffice to prove that the Chinese "regularly beat their wives."¹

On the whole, the two sexes reserve for each a special sphere impenetrable to the other. Neither professes to know much about the other's business, and stunted moralists, who were unhappily misguided, like the Puritans, by the thirst for morbid virtue, went so far as to formulate that what happened inside must not be reported outside the domestic pale, and what happened outside must not be discussed in the room, that is, the bedroom.

¹ An excellent account on the position of women in China, based on careful observation, may be found in Johnston, *op. cit.*, ch. ix.

The business in common, it seems, would be entirely domestic. Yet what else does one expect in such a society, if the wife and the husband have each her or his business to attend to and have home-life in common? It may not be at all infrequent that inquisitive wives insist on asking questions and annoy their husbands; and amusing but rather unpleasant scenes such as Aristophanes has drawn from the ancient Greek domestic life may not lack their counterpart in China.¹

Now marriage to a girl is by far the greatest festival of her life, for she is privileged to have one, and generally only one, while the widower, on the other hand, may marry again. The Chinese view of marriage may be best interpreted by the following translation from the text of the *Book of Rites* :

“Marriage is to make a union between two persons of different families, the object of which is to serve, on the one hand, the ancestors in the temple, and to perpetuate, on the other hand, the coming generation. Hence the sage makes this a great occasion.”²

As a rule the ceremony is performed with great pomp and splendour. Among certain large

¹ “Then we question you mildly and pleasantly; inward grieving but outwardly gay;

‘Husband, how goes it abroad?’ we would ask of him;

‘What have ye done in Assembly to-day?’

‘What would ye write on the side of the Treaty-stone?’

Husband says angrily, ‘What’s that to you?’

‘You hold your tongue!’ And I held it accordingly.”

Aristophanes, *Lysistrata*.

² *Vide Liki*, Legge’s translation, pt. iv, pp. 264-5, and cf. the Greek view of marriage.

families the procession lines the streets for miles, and the "honour-tablets" (tablets whereon honours from the government are inscribed) of the two families specially exhibit the family distinctions. The bridegroom, following the procession, goes to his bride's home to receive her, and when the bride arrives he is to bow three times before she leaves the wedding chair.¹ The ceremony to be performed is in fact religious: first comes the worship of "Heaven and Earth." Neither idol nor picture is used, only incense is burned, and according to what we have seen, the worship is indeed as simple as can be. The performance of this worship—that is, bowing and kow-towing—is assisted on the part of the bride by two bridesmaids, and on the part of the bridegroom by two "best men." Next comes the most important part of the ritual. The couple, accompanied by two or three ladies from the families or from near relatives, sip some wine and change glasses (this being called union-happiness-glass), and then the hair of the bridegroom is fastened to that of the bride, and vice versa.² Hence we have the phrase "hair-fastened" couple, meaning inseparable or faithful and loving. Everything being settled, the couple proceed first to worship

¹ In certain families, the bridegroom does not go to his father-in-law's home, but only waits to receive the bride instead. According to the old rite, the bridegroom has to ride on a horse before the bride's chair.

² This is undoubtedly of magical origin. The idea might have been to inhibit separation by fastening each other's hair, which is a kind of sympathetic magic. Gradually its meaning is lost, but the fastening of hair is stereotyped into a custom.

before the ancestors in the temple, and then to meet every member of the family, relatives and friends. The object of this meeting is to introduce them to the bride, who is—poor creature—a total stranger in the family, although she has probably known them by hearsay. This ceremony, however, is strictly observed, for it represents the occasion for fixing the position of the couple and to indicate to them who are their elders and juniors.

Upon the whole, the bride is not so lonely as is supposed. She is always provided with a handmaid,¹ accompanying her for from a month to a year, and in many cases the handmaid follows her for a very considerable time. On the sixth or the ninth day after marriage the couple are invited to dinner by the parents of the bride, but paradoxical as it seems, the two are not entertained together! The honeymoon trip does not exist, yet the conventional rule forbids the husband to leave his wife in the first few months. This is important, as many Chinese are obliged to attend to business far away from home without bringing their wives with them. As is well known, the duty of a wife to her parents-in-law differs but little from that of a daughter, but it goes far beyond the mark to say, as many writers have done, that the wife calls her parents-in-law parents—which statement only shows the ignorance of the Chinese language. The wife possesses the special privilege of visiting now and then her own

¹ Cf. p. 104, note.

people, the period for the visit being generally a month, and two being made every year.

It requires but the last touch to finish our picture of the Chinese woman. She has, as we have seen, autonomy within her own sphere; she is invested with the liberty of any kind of religious worship; she is qualified as an heiress; she can refuse betrothal and marriage if she chooses to be a spinster; and a married woman is the *ipso facto* ruler of the "inner circle." But the very fact of her seclusion handicaps her greatly in the arena of life. That a certain number of Chinese women lead an unhappy life would be as incontestable as to say that a great number of them are, as I have shown, rightly mated and happy. The chief cause of their unhappiness is probably their privacy. Privacy leads to solitude, offers a narrow outlook of life, and deprives them of many instinctive activities. Yet it is doubtful whether emancipation—to use a current term—would at once bring them happiness and insure their security. While fully admitting the high qualities, and sometimes even the superiority, of our womankind, one can yet hardly argue without flinching that to allow them the struggle for economic independence as we find it here would be entirely a social gain.

Of the three great occasions of life—birth, marriage, and death—the provision for the dead is considered by the Chinese as of very great importance, if, indeed, not the greatest. The saying of

Confucius, " Serve the dead as if they were living," has inspired the whole population for centuries, and now ancestor-worship has become a national cult. Ancestor-worship, it needs to be remembered, manifests itself in many aspects in the Chinese life, as has been described at some length in the last chapter, while the burial of the dead, which is looked upon as so important by the Chinese, is only one of them. The funeral, which really resembles a festival procession, has become a celebration in memory of the dead. All the honours and titles that the dead and also the ancestors of the dead won are displayed in a grand scale. Then the image of the dead is put in a luxuriously made sedan-chair, carried by a number of persons. Then come the guests and the relatives of the dead, who follow the funeral. Before the coffin a gigantic placard is put up stating the name, the title, and the age of the dead. That the Chinese believe, or used to believe, there is an under-world corresponding exactly to that of our own, is perhaps well known. There are titles in the nether world, not unlike those of our own : hence the dead always bears the title of the nether world.

Mourning, as one aspect of ancestor-worship, is considered in the Chinese mind to be of great importance to indicate the right relationships amongst the members of the family, and also amongst the close relatives. There are prescribed rules for mourning with regard to the length of time, the

degree of mourning, and the clothes to be worn.¹ And law punishes those who neglect them. This stereotyped custom, in fact, a concomitant of the family system, it seems will have to remain for some time even if the family life is broken.

We have so far followed the individual from his or her birth to the grave. Readers might have gathered how a Chinese is born and lives in a number of relationships; and how a Chinese is burdened with numberless duties towards one and another, and, in fact, to every member of the family; and, lastly, how a Chinese drudges, not only for himself, but also for the family to which he or she belongs. The Chinese are, however, not merely working machines; nor are they galley slaves. If a Chinaman succeeds, the success itself will not only cheer one man, but also his family and relatives—nay, even his ancestors are thereby honoured. That even the relatives participate in the immense joy on the occasion of the child-birth, as we have mentioned, may perhaps illustrate the social feeling of the Chinese. If a Chinaman fails, his despair, like his success, is shared by the family and the relatives. Far from being a solitary animal, he is consoled and encouraged. Many of our poor are supported, not by any public relief, but privately by the members of the same clan and the relatives; that great scholars, when fatherless and resourceless in their youth, are reared and tended

¹ See De Groot, *The Religions of the Chinese*, vol. ii.

by relatives, is our common experience. Hence the Chinese, in spite of the web of relationships, works with joy, with willingness, and with hope.

We need not enter in this chapter into the education and the religion of the Chinese, for each, because of its paramount influence on our social life, deserves a description, as exhaustive as it is impartial. Let us, however, review briefly the amusements of the Chinese. With the great variety of gods, the Chinese have nearly half of the year the birthdays of these gods. The birthday of each god is celebrated in the temple where the god is worshipped. The day forms a day of recreation to the people far and near, especially to women and children, as not all men have holidays. Some may be concerned with the worship of heathen gods, but the majority of the people enjoy the pleasure of watching the crowds, the stalls, and the games. A day of recreation indeed, as there is no drunkenness, no disgraceful scenes. It is an interesting study to watch the orderly crowd, without even the shadow of a policeman; the cheerful and contented faces of women and children add joy to the visitors. There are besides festivals throughout the whole year regularly held by the people. The old Chinese calendar, which is calculated according to the lunar system—that is, according to the complete revolution of the moon around the earth—divides itself into 28 periods. These periods are very convenient for the farmers, and the first day of each period is observed

with some kind of practice or entertainment. In the town, music-halls and theatres are not lacking, but in poorer districts theatres may be temporarily had in festival time or in the time of fair.

Apart from the quasi-religious observances, in which all people take part, we may mention two kinds of amusements which are purely social in character. One of them is the flower show. It is a display of flowers, cultivated and tended by amateurs; the flowers, say the chrysanthemums, are of great variety, and are made to represent words or things. The show usually takes place in a square or a temple, so that everybody may come and see. Of course, no fee is charged, no policeman is necessary to look after the property. In the time of festival processions, it may be added, similar shows also take place along the routes through which the procession passes. Flowers, curios, artistic engravings, pictures, and writings, in short, everything that is rare from the artistic point of view, are displayed. These are generally in the possession of certain families, but they are, on these occasions, free to let spectators gaze and admire.

The *literati* are not, as most people conceive, a reserved people, being placed far above the other classes of people. As is well known, our *literati* are drawn from all classes of society; they are not an hereditary class. It depends entirely upon one's own talent to distinguish oneself as a *literato* or to lead a poor scholarly life. The *literati*, therefore,

differ in nothing from the other classes of the people. They may join the festivals or the processions, but they may also guide the common people to indulge in more intellectual games. The "lantern riddle" is one example of the latter. Riddles in slips, which allude generally to the passages from the classics or lines from celebrated poets, are hung on a big paper lantern, and under each riddle special kinds of prizes are stated. The lantern is used because the game often takes place in evenings, and all people, whether they are coolies or *literati*, are invited to take part, when the lantern is hung amidst the gazing crowd. Whoever has solved the riddle may tear down the slip and will be instantly ushered in to the *literati*, who arrange the game. If the solution is right, he will be rewarded with stationery or books.

With this we must close our description of Chinese social life, which, we confess, is but fragmentary. More, far more, may be written about the life of the Chinese people, which is generally supposed to be miserable. That archaic people, bound by conventions and customs instead of law, governed by talented paternal chiefs instead of by themselves, and lastly, sticking to old traditions instead of adopting alien ideas, may, it seems, have a social system deserving of careful study. We can only hope that the few new ideas which we may have suggested will facilitate the better understanding of the Chinese people.

CHAPTER IV

THE POPULAR ASPECT OF CHINESE BUDDHISM

THE first introduction of Buddhism into China under the imperial auspices in the year A.D. 68 certainly leaves a most striking and unparalleled landmark in the history of humanity. For, on the one hand, unlike Christianity, to which pagan Europe was converted and on which was built a Judæo-Hellenic civilization, on the other hand, unlike the European civilization which, having taken root in America, annihilated its ancient culture, Buddhism brought into China exotic currents, intellectual and spiritual, that at once greatly enriched and strengthened, without dominating or being incompatible with, her old culture. In spite of the alleged persecution¹ in China, Buddhism has so far supplied the Chinese with a *Weltanschauung* that was half-forgotten, a philosophy that is at once fresh and highly intellectual, a metaphysic that is far more comprehensive and subtle than her sages had ever attempted, an ethics that supplements to

¹ Cf. De Groot, "Sectarianism and Persecution in China: Is there Religious Liberty in China?" (an article in *Mitteilungen des Seminars für Orientalische Sprachen an der Königlich Friedrich Wilhelm Univ. zu Berlin*, 1902).

a certain extent the teachings of Confucius, and rites and worship—a later development of Buddhism—in which the mass of the people find consolation. Mr. Joseph Edkins, in his learned work *Chinese Buddhism*, has indeed uttered such dogmatic and unverifiable judgments as “Buddhism has added to it (Confucian system) only idolatry, and a false view of the future state, but has not contributed to make the people more virtuous,”¹ or, “Indeed all the force of the moral teaching of the Chinese is in Confucianism, and not in Buddhism.”² Unfortunately, moral progress or retrogression in the character of human beings or in social relations does not invariably correspond with the lofty teachings of great moral philosophers, so it is a blame undeserved if all the evils among the Chinese, if evils there are, are attributed to Buddhism. Moreover, it is simply idleness to speculate upon the cases of “if not” which are so abundant in the pages of history, since that Buddhism has implanted itself in China is a fact. Whether or no Buddhism has been a boon to China as a society can hardly be judged offhand. Thus much we do know, that with Buddhism not only metaphysic and philosophy, which are inherent in the teachings of Buddha and somewhat foreign to the Chinese mind, but philology, mathematics, and astronomy were also finding their way to fertilize the minds of the Chinese learned. Chinese books abound in

¹ Edkins, *Chinese Buddhism*, p. 200.

² Edkins, *op. cit.*, p. 201.

Sanskrit words, transcribed or translated, and we find even the most illiterate people, being imbued with Buddhistic ideas, use in everyday parlance such words as Karma (act), Dharani (charms), Stupa or Tope (pagoda), or Bodhisattva. If Buddhism with its philosophy and metaphysic, mathematics and philology, has much enlightened the intellectuals of China, it has had no less—nay, much more—influence on the mass of the people. The present essay, though by no means pretending to be exhaustive, is an attempt to show how much Buddhism has modified Chinese society by a study of some of her customs and traditions that savour of Buddhism. It is of course assumed here that a man or a woman is justifiably called Buddhist if he or she conforms to Buddhist rites and conventions, just as a man who attends religious services regularly is considered a Christian in the West, no matter what his private life.

Buddhism has developed along two main lines after the third Council at Pataliputra (ancient name for Patna) in 246 B.C. under King Asoka. The Hinayana School—that is, the school which preaches Small Conveyance—is interesting for the preponderance of asceticism and the absence of metaphysical speculation and mysticism. It has close affinity with the primitive Buddhism as taught by Buddha himself and his immediate disciples. Its adherents using the Buddhist text in the Pali language are found in Ceylon, Burma, and Siam. The Maha-

yana School, on the other hand, the School of Great Conveyance, provides different teachings to suit different classes of hearers and offers universal salvation for the world. Its prominent features are the importance of meditation and speculation, and in its degenerated form the practice of magic and sorcery. It spread after the third Council at Pataliputra from India northwards through Nepal over Tibet, Mongolia, China, and Corea and Japan; and there is every reason to believe that all Turkestan was once converted to the northern Buddhism. Hence discrepancies arose between the two schools to no small degree as time went on, although it has been said that the Buddhism of China and of Ceylon are "in complete accord."

The Chinese adopted the Mahayana School of Buddhism at the time when they had already had in philosophy Confucian ethics and in religion Laotze's ascetic quietism. Having few things that are common to either, Buddhism, in spite of the scholar monks who endeavoured to maintain its purity, naturally adapted itself to the already existing institutions and the national mind; it was assimilated or assimilated others. Lacking in the systematic and synthetic mind as they are, the Chinese hardly tried to systematize the three great systems, Confucianism, Taoism, and Buddhism. A bewildering and chaotic state is thus tolerated by the common people with candid indifference; in many parts of the country we find the "Hall of

the Three Religions," in which Confucius, Laotze, and Sakyamuni are worshipped together as equals. Yet it is quite within our reach to disentangle beliefs and traditions, festivities and rituals, that are due to Buddhist influences, pure and simple, from those that are not.

Buddhism is an ascetic religion, and the admission of male and female members (*Upasaka* and *Upasaki*) who observe the principal commandments without entering upon monastic life was due to necessity, though the growth of the monastic order began late. It is therefore not unnatural that the marriage ceremony was not prescribed by Buddha. In fact, Buddha reminded the Bhikkhus (monks) that they should not give "advice touching the taking in marriage or the giving in marriage."¹ There is no trace whatever of the influence of Buddhism on the Chinese marriage ceremony, which, being based on the classical code and on remote traditions, has evidences of animism, and, perhaps, magic. About birth, too, Buddhist canons are equally silent. Buddha in fact did not allow a child under seven to be capable of attaining Nirvana, his argument being, like that of a moral philosopher, that a child, whatever its actions may be, is neither morally meritorious nor blameable.² Thus, in birth and in marriage, two cardinal points of life's journey, Buddhism has absolutely no discernible influence.

¹ *Buddhist Sutras* (*Sacred Books of the East* translation), p. 199.

² *Question of Milinda* (*Sacred Books of the East* series), pp. 177-81.

Now in China Buddhist influence begins to be exercised over a boy at the age of three or four. The boy is usually sent at that age to take vows in a monastery as the disciple of Buddha under the tutelage of a monk; he is given a necklace knit of red silk yarn, to be worn around his neck. The wearing of the necklace may have two interpretations: one is magical, and the other is Buddhistic. According to the former, the necklace, called “swo”¹ in Chinese, means “lock,” which is used as an amulet to prevent the life of the boy from being snatched away by Yama (the Indian God of Death) or Cheng Huang (the Chinese King of Hades). According to the latter, the necklace serves as a sign to show that the wearer has taken a pledge in a monastery. Instances of the taking of vows have been numerous in our history, and a certain prince used to take as many as three vows to serve in a monastery. Many people even after attaining manhood play the double part of a monk and a layman—of course in the capacity of the former the man very seldom goes to the monastery, but some-

¹ Prof. Seligman points out to me in connection with this the interesting “lucky thread” (*mangalasutram*) worn on the occasion of a woman’s marriage in S. India and then throughout her married life. (*Encyclopædia of Ethics and Religion*, vol. iv, p. 444.) But the Chinese “swo,” it seems, more resembles the Brahmanical cord (*yajñopavita*) worn by the high caste youth at the rite of initiation (*upanayana*). The nearer approach, however, is found in Tibet, where the Dalai Lama ties silk knots round the necks of his votaries. (Waddell, *Buddhism of Tibet*, p. 321.) It may also be possible that there is connection between the origins of the locket and the rosary. The most probable explanation, it seems to me, is that the Chinese derived the locket from India through Tibet.

times uses his Buddhist name. Among the Manchu noblemen it has been a custom to employ men for life to stay in a big monastery, as substitutes to "perform Buddhist rites of worship." This, we may mention in passing, accounts for the wealth and power of certain monasteries near Peking. Judging from these facts, we are not far from the truth in saying that the necklace is merely a new invention and a symbol of adherence to Buddhism. And we may also rightly infer that the magical interpretation is of comparatively later growth, when the mind of the people, being less imaginative and more materialistic, needs something to explain the utility of the necklace. To associate magic with what is purely a sign of a religious order seems but natural when we recollect stories relating the efficacy of Buddha's relics (*S'arira*) or relics from sacred places—a remarkable characteristic of Buddhism when it becomes decadent, and especially when it is popularized. In any case it is most unlikely that the necklace is entirely of magic origin and admits of no Buddhistic interpretation, for the rite of "*tiao-chang*," which I am now going to describe, shows that it is no amulet at all.

If the family is piously Buddhist, the boy who has taken vows in a monastery remains shorn-headed, like a monk, till the age of twelve. At that age he performs a rite called "*tiao-chang*" (leaping over a wall), symbolizing the escape of the disciple. A narrow bench is put sidewise in the

yard of the monastery ; the boy is told to leap over it and run straight home without turning his head, while his master feigns to chase him. This dramatic incident being over, the boy discards the necklace, begins to wear his hair, and generally, though not always, parts with his master, with whom he used to cultivate a friendship. In short, the boy is no more a Buddhist disciple ; this, however, does not necessarily mean that he does not worship Buddha or other Buddhistic gods again.

It must be admitted that this by no means universal custom of tutelage under a Buddhist monk really teaches the boy nothing with regard to Buddha or his teachings. It has doubtless an historical and well-intentioned origin, with which we need not deal, and, like a thousand and one customs in the other parts of the world, it lingers, although its utility as well as its meaning is lost in the mist of ages.

It will be noticed that Buddhism has very little influence over the girl ; perhaps it is reserved for her till she attains womanhood. Unlike the boy, she never takes vows in a convent, nor does she accept a Bhikkhuni (*i.e.*, nun) as her mistress. Now four kinds of activities characterize the life of a pious Buddhist woman. First of all she abstains from meat and fish for life or only for certain appointed days in a year. In the former case, she is usually a convinced Buddhist, being painfully aware of the teachings that all creatures are alike,

that animals are slaughtered merely to suffer for the evil deeds they have done in a former life, and that the slaughterer will have to suffer in return in the next life. These tenets sprang from the first commandment of Buddha, *i.e.*, "one should not destroy life." The abstainer, however, is usually influenced by the hope that a request or prayer might be answered. In the latter case, she may be fasting with a view to obtain some boon for herself, for her parents, for her husband, or for her parents-in-law. Sometimes we find a widow abstains from fish and meat with the hope that her deceased husband might enter the "Paradise in the West" (Sukhavati).

Now, to whom is the vow taken and from whom is the answer of the prayer generally expected? This cannot be easily answered, for it involves first of all the most essential and interesting question how the primitive Buddhism, being an agnostic and ascetic religion, has developed into a theistic, and later polytheistic, cult, not unmingled with magic and animism; secondly, the no less important and equally interesting problem of identifying Buddhist gods and goddesses that are found at the present time throughout the length and breadth of China with the eminent personages or even abstract terms that were alluded to or found in the *Pitakas* (Buddhist Scriptures). These momentous questions we do not propose to treat, as both require a separate and far more exhaustive study. Let us

say, without paying attention particularly to the polytheistic aspect of the Chinese Buddhism, that the prayer is offered to Buddha, to Kwan Yin, or to other departmental gods. A childless woman, for instance, would offer a prayer to the Kwan Yin or a “Son-sending goddess” in a Taoist temple—the common people do not distinguish the two—and take the vow to be a vegetarian. If perchance the prayer is answered, she would continue to fast to express thankfulness. If not, she, unlike those who “punish their gods as they punish their fellow-men” when the expectation is left unfulfilled, would renunciate, would attribute the fact to her own sins or misdeeds, and would find reason in the cardinal doctrine of Karma—which to a certain extent is fatalistic in tendency—that she is doomed to her fate owing to the misbehaviour of her former life.

For recovery from illness, for safety on a long journey also, is the prayer offered and the vow to remain a vegetarian taken. It is indeed paradoxical that the very woman who fasts well knew the secrets of progeny, the real causes of disease, and the circumstances under which certain human miseries occur; we would have imagined that her intelligence stands no higher than either that of the Banks Islanders, who are ignorant of physical parentage, or that of certain African tribes or Australian aborigines who think that disease is the punishment of a god or an evil spirit. Let me

make a justification once for all for beliefs which are contradictory and practices which seem paradoxical.

The mass of the beliefs—call them superstitions if you like—that are taken in by the good-natured, simple-minded people in China without protest corresponds with the stage of “developed magic.” I cannot do better than to quote the words of Mr. Marett’s illuminating explanation and penetrating analysis. Those beliefs represent a type characteristic for “their *prima facie* illusiveness” which is attached to them, “without, however, managing to invalidate them.”¹ The mind of these Buddhist women, we may say with Mr. Marett, is at saner moments “aware that it is pretending, yet loth to abandon a practice rooted in impulse and capable of affording relief to surcharged emotion.”² It is tolerably clear, I think, that such-like make-believe, however childish and incredible it seems at first blush, really affords to the ignorant masses a “relief to surcharged emotion”—a peaceful and calm haven for a storm-beaten ship.

The second activity of a Buddhist woman is to repeat Sutras. There exists a number of such Sutras adopted for the use of repetition out of memory, *e.g.*, the Sun Sutra, the Heart Sutra, the Sutra of the “August God (or Goddess) Kwan Shi Yin.” The repetition is simplicity itself: the woman, holding a rosary and passing from one

¹ Marett, *Threshold of Religion*, p. 35.

² Marett, *op. cit.*, p. 50.

bead to another, repeats out of her memory the sentences from the Sutra. She looks vaguely and mystically before her while reading; of course the service, being sacred and serious, must neither be interrupted nor disturbed by noises. The service usually takes one hour or more. As a rule, those who repeat the Sutras are confined to middle-aged or old women or widows, for at that age only she can become intensely religious. With the advance in age, with the increase of experience, with, perhaps, the result of acute suffering, in short, with the realization of the discrepancies between fancies or ideals on the one hand and facts or realities on the other, she can but find consolation in some kind of faith or make-believe to relieve her suffering, to expiate her misdeeds, to cultivate her own or her relatives' Karma. No doubt by constant repetition the meaning of the Sutras may be obliterated from the reader's mind, especially if there are too many transcribed Sanskrit words, but we must maintain that a good deal of the teachings in the Sutras is instilled, not only in the mind of the reader herself, but also in the hearers in the same family. Its utility, however small, can hardly be denied.

Next in importance in the practices that a woman Buddhist follows is the "emancipation of living creatures." Imbued with the teaching of Buddha that the lives of all creatures are equally valuable on the ground of transmigration and

metempsychosis, and especially the first precept of Buddha, the Chinese have always treasured the lives of all creatures. Never, it is true, is the duty of this emancipation of lives carried to the letter, but the morals of the people, especially with regard to the treatment of animals, is certainly very much influenced. The Buddhist practises the rite of emancipating living creatures only on certain days fixed for the purpose. On that day she would buy living fishes—almost in all the Chinese towns fish are sold and bought when they are living—from the market, and then put them in the pond in the monastery or in the river. It may be said that this forms only a remnant of what is “emancipation of living creatures” in the Buddhistic sense. With the dearth of fish, it has been found that even this is dying out.

It has been shown that fasting, Sutra-reading, and emancipation of fishes can all be done at home, while pilgrimage, the fourth activity of the Buddhist, can only be made by the devotee in person by going out of doors. Since the sacred spots which mark the birth, death, and attainment of Nirvana of Buddha are beyond the reach of the Chinese Buddhists, they are content to visit the sacred monasteries, each of which is well situated in a mountain and alleged to contain Buddhist relics (*S'arivas*), *e.g.*, Wu Tai Shan, in Shansi, Tien Tai Shan in Chekiang, Puto Shan in the Chusan Islands, Omei Shan in Szechuan, etc. For

lack of any sacred mount that is within the possible approach of the Buddhist, a temple of much humbler origin and size may also suffice for the purpose. In villages and small towns festivities are held on certain days in honour of gods, and the villagers from far and near crowd the spot. Amusements such as theatricals and jugglery offer the villagers recreation, and, in fact, attract more pleasure-seeking people than genuine worshippers. The two kinds of pilgrimage thus differ widely and have each its peculiar features : while in the one the monastery is quiet and tranquil, the service sacred and solemn, and the worshipper pious and devoted, in the other the temple is noisy and gay, the sightseer babbling and talkative, and the worshipper at the service, which consists of burning of incense, presentation of offerings, and kow-towings before the image, is deafened by the din outside the hall. Nor are the characteristics the same ; for in the one the service certainly aims at “ spiritual communion ” and “ religious atonement,” if I may borrow these phrases, whereas in the other social enjoyment and public entertainment predominate on the occasion, leaving the religious side of the festival rather at the background.

Let us at this juncture review the four activities of the Chinese woman Buddhist, which have been dealt with in detail. There is, to a certain extent, utility in each, as we have incidentally shown in a meagre way, but above all they offer to the Chinese

woman, intensely religious as she is, an opening to develop her spiritual life. To a less degree, we may say, good conduct is insured. The commandment of Buddha, known even to the most ignorant, has become proverbial; it says, "Fast, read the Sutras, and do good things." By good things our people understand first of all charity and emancipation of lives. With regard to the latter, another popular saying is equally inspiring and impressive, "To save the life of a human being is worth much more than to build seven stages of a Stupa (pagoda)"; it is undoubtedly derived from the first precept of Buddha. One characteristic, however, which is common to the four activities, deserves especial mention; it shows the peculiar spirit of an Eastern woman. It is no other than altruism, or negation of self. More frequently fasting is performed, as I have mentioned, for parents or other members of the kin; Sutras are read not always for the re-birth of the reader herself at Sukhavati (Paradise in the West), but generally for the sake of others; the benefit of "the emancipation of life" is reaped by all members of the family; and in pilgrimage the vow is usually taken for the good of others. Indeed, the prayer offered to the "son-sending Goddess," more often silently repeated in the mind, runs, if it is uttered at all, that "May So-and-So (the name of her husband) be endowed with a child as a grace from Heaven (or from the departmental goddess or Buddha)!"

It is truly regrettable that Eastern Altruism, in the forms that I have described, is never extended beyond the ken of kinship, though charity does not fall within this wide generalization. Thus much we may, however, still maintain, that compassion and sympathy of the people have developed to a considerable degree, as they are shown in some of the voluntary institutions.

Apart from the stereotyped performances of the Chinese Buddhist, a most interesting question as regards the popular belief of Buddhist tenets may naturally arise. What, for instance, is the popular Chinese conception of Karma? of Transmigration? of Nirvana? of Immortality? of Heaven and Hell? of the Nature of Buddha? And many other questions on the same line may also suggest themselves to us. These intricate and momentous questions we see no means to answer, at any rate, at present; for, the mental capacity of men being different widely from one another, of such conceptions concerning religion, there must be as many as there are individuals. We see no justification at all for alleging or maintaining dogmatically that the Chinese conception of God is agnostic, the Chinese conception of Heaven and Hell materialistic, and such-like general statements without referring to their practices, rituals, ceremonies, liturgies, and observations in which the whole mass of belief is or was embodied. In the following we propose to deal with two rituals,

which, we believe, may shed a good deal of light concerning some questions enumerated in the above. But Truth, be it remembered, is delusive, and the principles which seem to underlie the practices we are going to describe are only of a relative value, for the general intelligence of the people makes it seem incredible that they should believe in such contradictory and preposterous things.

CHAPTER V

THE POPULAR ASPECT OF CHINESE BUDDHISM

(Continued)

OF all festivals that are introduced to China through the influence of Buddhism, such as the birthday of the Buddha, the fictitious birthday of Kwan Shi-Yin, etc., the most interesting is the Ullambana. Ullambana is a Sanskrit word meaning "hung up by the heels," and its Chinese transcription is merely a phonetic transliteration, "*Yii-lan-pen*," which, however, conveys the meaning of "a utensil containing the offerings." This ceremonial, it is interesting to note, is unknown to Southern Buddhism, and it has been in vogue in China since the eighth century, five centuries after the translation of the Ullambana Sutra by the Tantra School.

The Ullambana Sutra is obviously under the forged authority of Buddha, and before examining its effect upon the Chinese mind, as a development of Buddhism, it is necessary to narrate the facts therein described. Having acquired the six supernatural talents (*Abhidjua*), says the Sutra, Mahamandgalyayana, a disciple of Buddha, constantly waiting on his left-hand side, desired to return the

kindness of his parents who had brought him up. When wandering in the worlds he perceived with his remarkable eyesight that his mother, owing to her misbehaviour in her former life, was in the company of hungry ghosts (Prêtas). Lacking food and nourishment, she was in the form of a skeleton. Thereupon Mahamandgalyayana felt intensely aggrieved and sorrowful. But on presenting a bowl of rice (?) to his mother, it became burning flame as soon as it was grasped in her hand. On this he screamed and cried bitterly, and away he went to report it to Buddha. Buddha addressed him : “ Your mother’s sin is deeply rooted ; it is not your singular effort that is of any avail. Although you are filial and your heartrending cry makes the heavens and earth tremble, yet the gods in both heavens and the earth, the monsters and priests of heretic sects, and the four gods of the four heavens (that is, ‘ guardian gods ’) can do absolutely nothing. Only by the collective effort of the monks of ten quarters your mother may get relief. Now I will inform you of the way towards salvation, through which all the infernal punishments may be averted from suffering and pain.” Accordingly Buddha told Mahamandgalyayana that on the 15th of the seventh month, when they are in the midst of the summer recess, the monks of the ten quarters ought to try to propitiate and atone for the parents and also the parents of the last seven generations who have sinned. Those who desire

to atone for sin have to provide rice of all kinds of taste, five kinds of fruit, utensils for washing and keeping the water, oil, and candles, bed and bed-clothes, and all sweet and good things that may be supplied, for the most virtuous monks of the ten quarters. . . . Thus all the disciples of Buddha who desire to be filial and obedient ought to think in every waking instant of parents and ancestors of the past seven generations. In the fifteenth of the seventh month in each year one ought to recollect with filial piety and grateful obedience the kindness of parents, and therefore to observe the Ullambana, to give charity to Buddha and monks, so as to return the kindnesses of nursing, bringing up and parental love. . . .¹

From this bewildering and incoherent statement extracted from the Ullambana Sutra we find many interesting points worth studying. We need not trouble ourselves with the difficult problem of the origin of this forged Sutra, which perhaps has its source either in Northern India or Tibet. There is no doubt that Mahamandgalyayana was an historical figure around whom certain legends cluster, and accordingly assume the present shape of a Sutra under the forged name of Buddha. For our present purpose it is interesting to examine its influence on the Chinese social life and also to discover how far the Ullambana has changed its meaning.

¹ See a slightly different version in Waddell's *Bud. in Tibet*, p. 98.

First filial piety and ancestor-worship occupy a very great and conspicuous part throughout in the Sutra. The commentator of the said Sutra has indeed, from his orthodox Chinese point of view, placed filial piety as the highest virtue of either a Buddhist or a layman. The fact that the Ullambana festival has been widely if not universally observed in China is, we may therefore conclude, chiefly due to the native beliefs and practices of the people, such as the cult of ancestor-worship, the belief in the ghosts (li) whose propitiation has been neglected, the vague idea that there is heavenly or natural retribution. It is certainly striking to note how easily the ideas in the Ullambana Sutra are engrafted on the Chinese mind, since they are congenial, while other doctrines, like that of Nirvana or of Skandhas (theory of Aggregates) have never appealed to the mass of the people, a limited number of scholars and priests being excepted.

Secondly, the festival, having taken root in China, has also changed its meaning. As we have noted, the observance was intended to atone for the sins of parents and ancestors; but to claim that the ancestors have sinned is to the Chinese the biggest scandal that one can ever imagine. Such hypocrisy as to deny the sins of parents or ancestors, even if sins there are, is not uncommon in China—perhaps it is tolerated everywhere. Since reference has been made in the text of the Ullam-

bana Sutra to the fact that Mahamandgalyayana's mother fell among the *prêtas* (hungry ghosts), the ceremonial, the Chinese take it, is merely observed for the purpose of appeasing the hungry ghosts and atoning for their sins. Hence the ritual has acquired an entirely new meaning : out of family or clannish exclusiveness there emerges a wider social significance of the ceremonial. Propitiation and atonement as embodied in the long and elaborate ceremonial indicate clearly the social nature of the whole service. The service consists chiefly of the repetition of the Yoga Tantras by the monks, the burning of incense, and the consumption of paper-made things in the flame. Some words may not be out of place to describe the text of the Yoga Tantras, which, judged from the point of view of literature, must be admitted as a very beautiful and poetical piece of standard work, unfortunately hampered by the intermingling of gibberish-like charms and spells. Without either lavishing too many words on the quality of the book as a fine specimen of *belles-lettres* or being too exact on the magical feature of the exorcisms, we may mention that the book consists of invocations to ghosts or spirits of all sorts and conditions of men, from kings and princes to criminals and beggars, from most celebrated women to women of ill fame. Another interesting feature of the text is the constant allusion to the Chinese historical figures and classical writings, which fact

certainly invalidates the authenticity of the book as a translation from a Sanskrit original, except for the abundance of Sanskrit charms. It is scarcely possible to describe in so far as space permits other characteristics of the book, such as its symbolism, its allusion to the Sukhavati (to be treated later), its invocation to all the Buddhas, and its most pious and devoted prayer to the "Boundless Light in the West"; suffice it to say that the book is, on the whole, a typical example of that kind of religious piety and enthusiasm which aims at the salvation of all beings that are spelt human. In reading the Tantras one finds the boundless compassion of the Buddhas (especially of Amitabha, the imaginary God of the Sukhavati) and the absolute pitiful submission of human beings to misery; in short, the book represents Buddhism in a new light: Sukhavati is substituted for Nirvana, salvation is searched for after death, ritual comes into prominence, and magic is resorted to. It is when we come to the magical element of the ritual that the picture is most sombre and sickening. Tantras mingled with incomprehensible Sanskrit charms (dharains) are repeated by the monks in a melodious tone, marked with an occasional outburst of monotone when the charms are read. Magical finger-play is practised in the belief that the *prêtas* may thereby be relieved of sufferings, and their sins be atoned for; while paper-made utensils and clothes are burnt for their

use—this being apparently one of the numerous examples showing how a native practice is assimilated.

Thirdly, the conception of Hell, though not clearly referred to in the Sutra, is another interesting point to be noted. The ancient Chinese had a very vague idea of Hell, and it was Buddhism that first enabled them to arrive at a much fuller and more definite conception. The Hell conceived by Buddhists differs fundamentally from that conceived by Christians, and the former, it seems, though also a hypothesis that defeats itself, is a more conclusive and logical conception. Without referring to the Buddhist texts which give rise to the formation of the idea of Hell, we may say that it is not a place, material or immaterial, where sinners are doomed for eternity.¹ For, according to Buddhism, there are six conditions of sentient existence, called *Gati*, of which ordinary beings in the Hell and *prêtas* (hungry ghosts) are two. There are besides *devas* (spirits of Heaven), *asuras* (demons with spiritual power), and what are most known to us men and animals. Beings in the Hell, *prêtas* and animals are labelled as “lower three paths,” which man must avoid. Each existence is conditioned by the Karma of a former one, while the existence of the present will also in its turn determine, according to its good or evil deeds or words, the next. Thus the Hell, so conceived,

¹ Such conceptions, I understand, are by no means universal among the Christians.

differs little from the world we know, and the beings in the Hell and *prêtas* are not dissimilar to ourselves. In other words, a ghost or a *prêta* is just a sentient creature like man, with feelings and desires, fears and sorrows. Brahmanic mythology again tends to latter-day Buddhism. *Yama*, the guardian god of Hell, who with his eighteen generals and his army of 80,000 men, holds courts of civil and criminal cases not unlike those of our own. Through the cultivation of Karma, the miracle of Transmigration renders each of the sin conditions of existence interchangeable. A man, for instance, may through his misdeeds be reborn as a *prêta* (like the mother of Mahamandgalyayana, who went to a *prêta* existence owing to her avarice and lying habits) and receive punishments inflicted by Yama's followers. The idea of retribution undoubtedly there is, but that retribution differs radically from "eternal punishment," for the *prêta* may, through his repentance, atonement, and cultivation of Karma, be reborn again as a man. The Hell thus conceived by the Buddhist is really a purgatory, so is the world of *prêtas*; and there is no wonder that the Chinese should deal with ghosts just as if they were men. Imagination, it is unhappily true, often ran wild in picturing various scenes in the Hell, about which many tales are told and from which folk-lore borrows its materials, but if critically examined the Buddhist conception of Hell, as depicted by tales and folk-lore, can

hardly surpass the Inferno of Dante, who with his unparalleled poetic expression brings us to an imaginary but vividly realized world. The details of the Dantesque Inferno and the Buddhistic Hell (*Narakas*), needless to say, are unlike, and in the *Narakas* there are no dominating figures to correspond with the illustrious poet Virgil and the loving soul Beatrice. The horrors of torture and the agonies of suffering, however, are in both essentially the same, equally repulsive and nerve-rending.

So much for the Buddhistic conception of Hell, which might be described at much greater length than here attempted. Let us now turn lastly to our fourth point—the popularization of the facts in the Sutra in the form of a play. As most of the Chinese plays have some pronounced moral import, decorated sometimes with high-sounding ethical precepts and loaded with cumbrous and clumsy allusions to the sayings of sages and historical records—of course, they must not be enacted with the standard or ideal of the playwright in the West—such illuminating moral examples of the evil consequences of misbehaviour and the admirable virtue of the filial Mahamandgalyayana could have scarcely escaped the notice of our ancient playwrights. The facts of the play are doubtless a little distorted, but the features are in essentials the same as are described in the Sutra.

Before passing on to discuss the atonement for

the dead as observed by almost all the Chinese families, no matter whether they are Buddhist in belief or not, let us sum up the different aspects of the Ullambana festival which has become a universal observance in China, and, in passing, examine the Buddhist conception of sin among the Chinese as evidenced by the rituals and ceremonials we have described. The Ullambana, as we have noted, by its crystallized form of a festivity and its popular form of a play, has rooted itself deeply with the long continuous march of time in the minds of the people. Is it good? one is bound to ask. In its aspect of a festival we see that it provides an occasion for public recreation, solemn but enjoyable—for the superstitious it is solemn because it arouses sympathy and compassion for the hungry and poor, while for those who are not superstitious it is enjoyable because it serves as a good spectacle. In its dramatic aspect it certainly brings home to the people the sense of filial piety and the sense of right living, although unhappily it may foster the false ideas of the nether world and other superstitions.

Sin, the Chinese ancients conceived, is not against God, although Heaven, as a disinterested judge, may bring evil consequences to the sinner. Buddhism confirmed this view, and, it seems, explained the nature of sin with more clearness. Prayer is discouraged, and exhortation to God is of no avail; and so far as primitive Buddhism is

concerned, the efficacy of rituals and ceremonies is considered one of the "delusions" or "fetters." Just as sin is regarded by the Chinese not as an act that provokes God's wrath by disobeying his commands or violating his laws, but as an act of one man that is morally wrong to another, so the teaching of Buddha, atheistic as it is, introduced no third party that sits as an authority to judge the actions of men and their merits or demerits. In fine, sin defines a state of relationship between man and man; it by no means involves God, if God there be; and its purification must be wrought by the man himself, and if there is purification its consequences must, in one way or another, automatically fall upon the sinner himself, without any interference at all on the part of the supernatural. Such being the idea of sin according to primitive Buddhism put in a nutshell, we need not be surprised that although the simple but lofty teachings of Buddha are much abused after having become popular; there exists still the "positivistic" conception of sin among the Chinese. The proverb well expresses the general belief: "One who acts will bring to himself consequences [but not to others]."

Unhappily such a conception does not always maintain its purity, for before as well as after the development of Chinese Buddhism, the people not unfrequently resort to a supernatural interpretation, and in so doing take natural phenomena, like

the drought, eclipses, comets and meteors, as supernatural retribution, or, at least, as heavenly warnings. Like instances abound in the pages of our history. We may, however, distinguish in the medley of historical facts two influences constantly at work, the one being the conception formed by the scholars and Buddhist students who take "sin" as a moral wrong involving no supernatural interference—the number of this class is very small—and the other being the conception taken by the majority of the people as well as so-called scholars, that certain natural phenomena are really a retribution on human sinfulness.

Now, the atonement of "sin" may be effected in more ways than one. By fasting, by reading the Sutras, by observing the precepts of Buddha, a man may improve his Karma and cultivate it in such a way as to free it from "sin" and to be reborn a better being. As I have noted, the observance of Buddhist rules, besides doing good to oneself, is also for the good of the near kin, and this, it must be clearly understood, is not "to cultivate the Karma" of a near relative—parents, the husband, sisters, or whatever the person may be—but is in the nature of a request, a prayer, vow, or invocation. Hence, on the one hand, we find that the personal "cultivation of Karma" differs radically from "the atonement of sin" in the Christian sense; it is merely right living. On the other hand, the vow, the invocation, or whatever

form it may take, that is an appeal to some being unknown, resembles the "ceremony of purification," the evidences of which are found all over the world. It is, in fact, "the atonement of sin." On it, as we have described, was built the popular festival of the Ullambana, in which masses are read to release the neglected ghosts from suffering, and their rebirth in a better world is assured by "the collective effort of the monks of ten quarters." On it, again, as we shall presently see, is built the popular observance of propitiating the dead as it is faithfully followed by nearly all the families in China.

The dead in China is looked after, in a sense, with more care and more ceremonial than the living. This, however, is not without its reasons. The departed, once so dear to us, has disappeared for ever; the primitive idea concerning the dead finds consolation, usually, though not universally, in treating it as if it were living. And Confucius' utterance, "Serve the dead as if they were living," is merely an echo of the ancient belief, with perhaps some moral import. The subsequent development of the disposal of the dead has been great; garments for the dead person, the burial, and the bogus science of geomancy all tend to show the persistence—nay, domination—of the primitive beliefs that had their root deeply planted in the remote ages of the past.

After the introduction of Buddhism, we find the

traditional ceremony of disposing the dead has gradually assimilated the later Buddhist ritual of propitiating the dead. The deceased is propitiated, as a rule, in the third day of death. He may be propitiated more than once. Two services are held; in the daytime nine or more monks are employed in charge of the service, in which the "Sutras of Pure-Land" (Dukhavati-vyuha Sutras) are repeated with the accompaniment of music; and in the evening the Yoga Tantra is recited, accompanied by the throwing of rice, bread, and money (to feed the hungry ghosts and to supply the gaolers and the needy in the Hell), the magical finger-play (to prevent the dead from being attacked by the evil ghosts), and, what is most important, invocations of the Compassionate Amitabha, that the dead might be reborn instantly in the "Paradise in the West" (Sukhavati). In the former service, the well-to-do may, in order to satisfy the materialistic mind, make a grand display of the scenes of the Sukhavati, taken from the Sutras, which, if properly interpreted, can be nothing but symbolism.

This brief sketch, although incomplete in itself, leads us to the interesting question of the Chinese conception of propitiation on behalf of the dead and the conception of Heaven. Firstly, propitiation is intended for the deceased parents in the name of the sons or descendants. Here the common-sense logic of the Chinese is not quite

clear. For, if the behaviour and doings of the deceased are free from taint and fault, what then is the use of propitiation? If, on the other hand, the deceased has sinned and is admitted to have sinned, why then is the sin not purified during the Ullambana festival which was destined to be purely a ceremony of propitiation? This, I think, must be interpreted as meaning that the proper rite of propitiating the dead members of a family—whether parents or any other member—is not merely propitiation as such, but also a prayer that the deceased might be born in the “Paradise in the West” (Sukhavati). The Yoga Tantra which, it is true, refers very often to the Sukhavati, is read, besides other Sutras, on this occasion as at the Ullambana festival, but the propitiation of the dead member of a family is certainly of a more particular character. The purification is not wrought for the dead—*prêtas* or beings in Hell—in general, but for the very person who has just died in particular. Long prayers are offered in the form of repeating the Sutras of the “Pure-Land Sect,” expecting that the dead may enter the “Paradise.” To arrive at a clear conception of Paradise and propitiation in the Buddhistic sense, it is here necessary to refer to some tenets embodied in the texts of the “Pure-Land School.” And we shall see that from them the popular practice really differs very little.

The three volumes of the “Sutra of the Bound-

less Age”¹ form the classical text of the “Pure-Land School,” otherwise known as the “Lotus School.” The first shows the stage in which invocation may and ought to be made, the second describes the importance of faith that helps towards the birth in the Paradise; the third deals with the perfection—that is, the actual conditions—of the Sukhavati in which all beings are born. Of course there is much redundancy and repetition, yet the process through which a man passes towards attaining the survival in the happy land of the Sukhavati is beautifully and minutely described with little that is vague. Here we have a clearly marked departure from the primitive Buddhism, as I have noted in dealing with the Yoga School, when existence in the Sukhavati—the goal of perfection, the ideal of man—is substituted for Nirvana, that “sinless calm state of mind.” As the attainment of the latter requires the devotee to follow faithfully the Noble Paths, the coming into existence in the former demands also a certain amount of devotion and piety. Faith, as Max Müller has well remarked in his Introduction, therefore plays the most important part; where deed fails, faith succeeds. True to its name as a branch of the Mahayana School, the sect provides for the salvation of all, irrespective of their deeds; and this is secured by sheer faith—faith in the omnipotence

¹ *The Larger and the Smaller Sukhavati-vyuha and The Meditations of the Amitayur* (Sacred Books of the East, vol. xix).

of the compassionate Amitabha and his two Bodhisathvas, Avatokitesvara and Mahasthama. Less importance, it is true, is attached to deeds and behaviour than in the tenets of primitive Buddhism, but the sect by no means takes away the fundamental doctrine of Karma, as Max Müller unduly alleges. For, according to the Chinese texts, there are three degrees of salvation, which are again subdivided into grades,¹ and each grade of salvation has its own features corresponding to the life of the saved. So far as the texts are intelligible, the land of the Sukhavati represents a hierarchy in which the individuals are not born the same, they have not equal merit, and they do not enjoy the same happiness in quantity or quality. Indeed, according to the Chinese text, the Smaller Sukhavati-vyuha, to which particularly Max Müller referred as invalidating the doctrine of Karma, distinguishes two kinds of birth: one being lower, birth from the womb, and one being higher, birth by transformation (from a lotus flower). These are only two modes of entering the course of transmigration; these, together with birth from moisture (as with fish) and birth from an egg (as among birds), we may mention in passing, form the Buddhistic conception of the modes of procreation. Clearly the conception of Karma is still retained. It is discussed only because and in so far as the desire for universal salvation is so great

¹ See, e.g., Amitayur Dhyena Sutra, pt. iii, pp. 188-99 (Mahayana Texts, *Sacred Books of the East* series).

and comprehensive that no human being, whether sinner or the sinless, is ruled out of eternal bliss. Being viewed in impartial light and being understood in such a spirit as here attempted, the doctrine of the Sukhavati, if not without materialistic defects, is elevating and comprehensive. It is not unnatural that it should gain the greatest number of adherents in both China and Japan; and it is only quite recently that its merit is somewhat reluctantly recognized in the West.¹

The doctrine of the Sukhavati has its closest parallel in certain tenets of Christianity; faith, for instance, as a cardinal virtue and first step towards securing the ascent to Heaven or Sukhavati, is only one remarkable coincidence of the two. While, to take another instance, faith in Amitabha is founded on his own most pious inspiring vow, faith in Christ rests in His divine character. We are not going to examine all these parallels in the present paper, but we may lay some stress on the fact that the doctrine of the Sukhavati, a mere outgrowth of Buddhism, has endured for so long and has spread so far.

After such a digression it is time to explain the proper function of propitiation for the dead, in which the sect of "Pure-Land" (Sukhavati) takes particular interest. As is shown in the Sutras, the Sukhavati can be attained by the cultivation of Karma during life-time by faith and recital of the

¹ Principal Carpenter, "The Buddhistic Conception of Salvation," article, *Hibbert Journal*.

Sutras, or even for the most degraded sinner by directing his thought towards it. For the last, even the pious repetition of Amitabha's name by others will, by arousing his compassion, help the dead to enter the Sukhavati. Thus, the dying man in his last moment, a Chinese book expounding the doctrine of the Sukhavati says, must repeat Amitabha's name silently in the mind (in order to invoke him), and the relatives must also repeat it in order to secure his birth in that Blessed Land. It is interesting to note here the difference between the primitive Buddhism and the Sukhavati sect of the Mahayana School. While the former postulates that *Trishna* (the thirst for life) is the first cause of suffering, the moving force of the eternal continuity of transmigration, and the immediate cause of birth—a condition and at the same time one form of suffering—the latter, on the other hand, maintains that the last thought of the dead, if concentrated in the Sukhavati or the Amitabha, will enable him to become a dweller in Paradise. The same principle, it seems, underlies both, but the spirit is so fundamentally different. This, however, is only by the way. The artificial means of helping the dead to be exalted to Heaven is resorted to, and here the proper function of the recital of the Sutras comes into prominence. The members of the family, being so nearly related to the dead, may in their name make invocations of Amitabha, this being in the form of a written

petition to be consumed in the flame.¹ In short, the day service represents an invocation of the Amitabha, with a sprinkling of propitiation ceremony, whereas in the evening service, when the Yoga Tantra is recited, the chief aim is to propitiate the ghosts, though the prayer of purification is not lost sight of. In the former, the ideas are lofty and honourable; the horrors of death, the brutality of Yama, the Death-god, and the cruel and outrageous sights of the Hell are pushed to the background, while the only object in view is to invoke the "Boundless Light" of his infinite compassion to admit the dead to the Glorious Land. Unfortunately the latter, having originated from a decadent school of Yoga, is, as I have mentioned, full of Sanskrit charms to pacify the ghosts, magical finger-play to put him in order, and other preposterous rituals; but for the charm and beauty of the Yoga Tantra in the Chinese version the service must certainly be considered as degrading and ridiculous. It may be safely maintained, however, that the popular Chinese ceremonial of propitiating the dead is on the whole well intentioned; it is hopefully, though not cheerfully, executed. It is not, as many supposed, a ghost-worship, communication with ghosts and goblins. In it we find many elements that are well worth the name of religion: infinite love and hope, solemnity and sincerity of prayer, the omnipotence of the Great Love. If

¹ There are other examples like this of the communication by correspondence between man and the supernatural in China.

perchance a spectator finds the service amusing rather than serious, frivolous rather than solemn, ritualistic rather than expressive, what better evidence can we put forward to show that great religious ideas, once codified into law or instituted into ritual, tend to become stiffened, feelingless, and meaningless, and hence the meaning and feeling as embodied in the law or the ritual diverge from those in the original ideas?

Now the conception of Heaven, as held by the Sukhavati Sect of the Mahayana Buddhists, is, if we judge by their three Sutras, crassly materialistic. We find, for instance, the mentioning of innumerable material objects, and their abundance, such as trees and flowers, jewels and diamonds, animals and birds, crystal and incense, lakes and hills. Like most Buddhistic conceptions, the original meaning of the description, it is true, was purely figurative and symbolical, but when such a description is taught or imparted to the mass of the people the symbolical character of all allusions is unhappily lost sight of. In the day service, for instance, we find the exact reproduction of bridges, known as "golden bridge" and "silvern bridge," both of which were alluded to in the text of the Sutra.¹ Symbolism of another kind that looms large in the service and widely adapted is the lotus flower. The highest mode of birth in the Sukhavati is transformation from a lotus flower, which for its purity

¹ See, e.g., *The Smaller Sukhavati-vyuha*, p. 94 (Mahayana Texts).

and uprightness has often been sung by Chinese poets, and is doubtless recognized as a typical symbol of an ideal. Thus, in the "soul-banner," which is carried by the chief mourner (that is, the son or the grandson as the continuator of the family) before the coffin in a funeral procession, there are both the leaf and the flower of the lotus. This apparently means that the soul of the dead will through the lotus-flower resume an angelic birth in that Happy Land.

When we contrast the conception of Heaven with that of Hell, as present in the minds of the Chinese, we find, however, that the former is by no means so exact or as definite as the latter. With the mass of the people, it is true, the materialistic conception predominates. With the learned, on the other hand, a large number of speculative accounts of Heaven other than Buddhistic is in existence. Yet, strange as it may seem, the conception of Heaven is never made definite. Sacred music may be overheard, infinitely brilliant and boundless, light may be shining, and sweetness of flowers and fragrance of incense may be felt; all these, however, give no definite idea as to the true state of the Paradise; how is happiness realized and how is existence continued? The fact that the conception of Heaven has been so vague is, of course, because, being merely a mental attitude aiming at perfection or riddance of suffering, sorrow, or any limitation of man, allows as many

interpretations as there are men who eagerly crave for such. In China, however, there is another reason why such a conception, though it was propagated by the three Sutras of the Sukhavati Sect, was not favoured with a rapid growth, but, on the contrary, stunted. Chinese thought, to put it broadly, has always been mundane or "positivistic." An "Elixir of Life,"¹ it is true, was once concocted, missions were sent to the "East Sea" to discover the "plant of longevity," a dead princess was raised to life. All these historical facts tend to show that the Chinese care very little about immortality or after-life; what they want is life in this world. This racial characteristic, I think, finds its expression in the fact that the three Sutras of the Sukhavati Sect, after having had a history of nearly a thousand years, failed to impart to the followers the real nature of the Paradise.

We can hardly enter here into other discussions which have bearing upon the popular aspect of the Chinese Buddhism. There are problems and problems, such as how Avalokitesvara, a bodhisattva under Amitabha in the Sukhavati, has become a household goddess, Kwan Yin; how the meaning attached to the image is conceived differently by the monks and the mass of the people; how the Buddhistic tenets failed to sack the citadel of Confucian ethics, family relationship, filial piety, loyalty to the good monarch; and how Buddhistic rituals

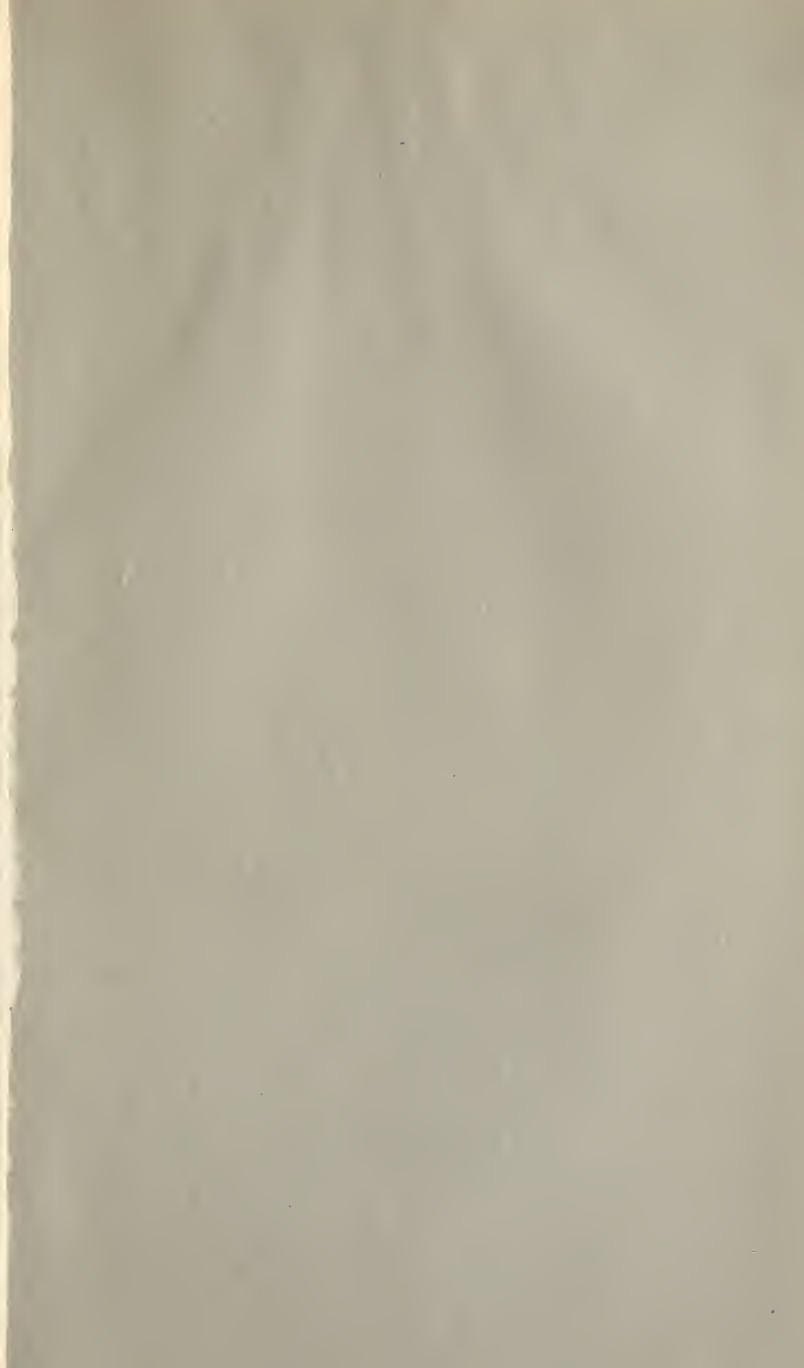
¹ See, for instance, MacGowan, *Imperial History of China*, p. 97.

have furnished the later Taoists with an example to build up a similar but degenerated religious brotherhood; but these we must defer to another occasion.

In conclusion, we may state that if the essence of Buddhism is adulterated, it at any rate has been widespread. What an eminent Buddhist scholar has said on the Third Council of the Buddhists, we may quote as equally applicable to Chinese Buddhism :

“ We can see now that the very event which seemed in the eyes of the world to be the most striking proof of the success of the new movement, the conversion and strenuous support, in the third century B.C. of Asoka, the most powerful ruler India had, only hastened the decline. The adhesion of large numbers of nominal converts, more especially from the newly incorporated and less advanced provinces, produced weakness rather than strength in the movement of reform.”¹

¹ Article, “ Buddhism,” by Rhys Davids, *B. Encyc. Brit.*, p. 749 (11th ed., 1910).



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